
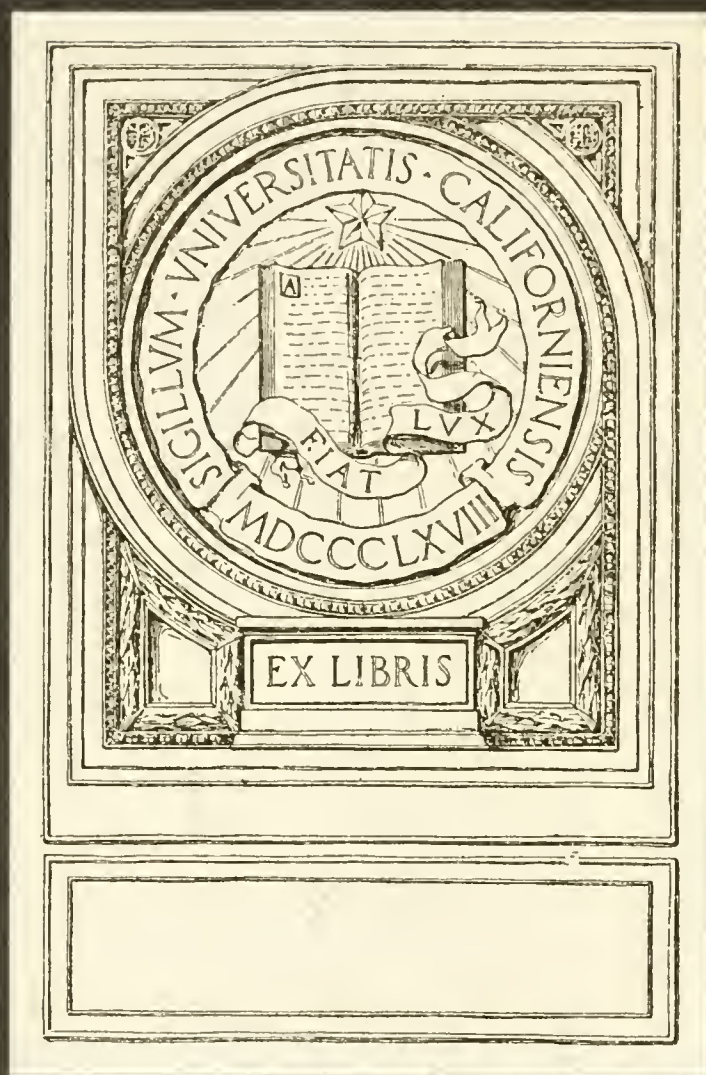


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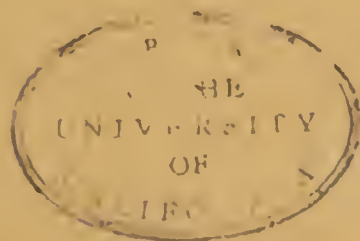
ROSMINI'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO  
ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY

BY  
JOHN FAVATA BRUNO, PH.D.

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy in the Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University

ARCHIVES OF PHILOSOPHY  
EDITED BY  
FREDERICK J. E. WOODBRIDGE

NO. 6, FEBRUARY, 1916



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# ROSMINI'S CONTRIBUTION TO ETHICAL PHILOSOPHY

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## INTRODUCTION

THE philosopher's life evolves in space and time, in a certain environment and at a certain historical period, the influence of which he can not fail to undergo. And, indeed, through his education and his surroundings, his native qualities are stimulated and modified, his mind is molded to certain habits of thinking, feeling, and acting. He feels impelled to share the aim and disposition of his time and race. And thus every phase of his thought and behavior is but a concrete, effective response to those specific needs, to those human problems which, being closely connected with social life, focus the attention of all. We can not, accordingly, consider his doctrine as an arbitrary, autonomous construction of ideas; we can not imagine it to be born spontaneously or by chance. The philosopher, anxious to bring his own contribution to social order, organizes a mode of reflective thinking quite personal. His philosophy, as every organized thought, inspired and controlled by a practical motive, is but his characteristic mode of adjustment to the current state of culture, to the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, and to that peculiar situation in which he happens to be. It embodies his concrete thinking, his lofty aspirations, and his endeavors to be useful to social organization. Thus we can not doubt that his point of view, his method, his mental attitude, all his psychological situation and activity are determined and conditioned by his own genius, notions, habits, and motives, as well as by contemporary social conditions. His philosophical elaborations may be regarded rather as a human and historical document. For they mirror the experiences and strivings, the wishes and hopes, the whole intimate drama of his life. They display the tints which he, as an artist, imparts to his assumption, combination, and solution of philosophical problems which always appear anew to each age and to each individual. And while they happen to be the genuine and abiding expression of his personality, they manifest the status of vital questions towards which the general interest converges, and the social demands that haunt minds at the time in which the philosopher lives.

We may, accordingly, explain why a philosophical system has a momentous significance, and even a powerful influence on the direc-

tion of contemporary minds; and yet its justification passes away with its historical conditions. Experience, and consequently philosophy, which is the emotional and intellectual attitude of an individual towards the urgent problems of life, follows social changes. Thus, a philosophical doctrine may be a useful instrument of social adjustment at a certain age, owing to social conditions which evoke it, and it may, however, lose all its value at another age, because of new social emergencies which call out new purposes and new habitual modes of confronting problems, and then new reflective thinking.

Thus, if we want to know the meaning, character, and value of a philosophical system, we must replace it in its historical frame, in its natural background. We must regard it as the mental attitude which the philosopher assumed towards the problems which were in the air when he lived. Only thus can we retrace the genesis of his ideas, his fundamental thought, and the leading motive of his intellectual efforts. Only then may we have the surest basis for understanding and appreciating his doctrine. To regard it as something merely abstract and isolated from human conditions, as independent of its author's universe of life and love, aloof from his reality and experience, or divorced from, and unrelated to the demands and interests of his social milieu, would lead to inevitable failure.

To value Rosmini's contribution to ethical philosophy it is necessary to trace first the historical tableau of the times in which he happened to live. A mere outline of the salient features of the political, social, and intellectual conditions of Italy while Rosmini was alive will answer our purpose.

In addition, it is of great importance to portray his personality, namely, his psychological dispositions, the motive which controlled his mental activity, his philosophical method, and the attitude he assumed towards the problems Italy confronted at that very time. After stating the historical and psychological factors of Rosmini's philosophy, I deem it important to give, as an introductory basis of his ethical teaching, a short survey of the fundamental principle of his philosophy, for he was convinced that ethics is dependent upon metaphysics.

The introductory study of the first part will present Rosmini's philosophical endeavors in the historical light, and will enable us to understand and appreciate the essential features of his ethical theory, which will form the core of the investigation and the subject-matter of the second part of the present study. Finally, after stating what the Italian philosopher contributed to the manifold stock of ethical theories, our interest will center upon the affinity that Rosmini's ethical principles seem to have with those of precedent philosophers.

# PART I

## THE FACTORS OF ROSMINI'S PHILOSOPHY

### CHAPTER I

#### HISTORICAL SITUATION OF ROSMINI'S ITALY

##### 1. *Social and Political Conditions*

THE period of Rosmini's life was characterized by political and social disturbance.<sup>1</sup>

Italy was kept in slavery by foreign rulers. Unexpected events, however, gradually concurred, from the second half of the eighteenth century forward, to awake her dormant will. The invigorating breath of political liberty which came from England, as well as the French humanitarian ideas which were spread all over Europe, stimulated some leaders of absolute government to give Italy the first impulse to a peaceful social and economic evolution. Thus, the French Revolution, which broke out contemporaneously with this movement, seemed there, at its beginning, to be a violent and disturbing phenomenon. The republican armies crossed the Alps, ap-

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Rosmini-Serbati (1797-1855) was born at Rovereto, in the Italian Tyrol, of noble and rich parents. He spent his boyhood and youth in an atmosphere of religion and study. In 1821 he entered the priesthood. He devoted most of his life to philosophical investigations and to a religious society which he founded, having as purpose the promotion of corporeal, intellectual, and spiritual works of Christian charity. In 1848 the philosopher Gioberti, at that time minister of the king Charles Albert, trusted our philosopher with the mission of inducing the Pope to be the chief of the desired Italian confederation. Rosmini undertook it as he was convinced that such a confederation could be the salvation of Italy and of the Church. But the precipitation of political events and the entourage of Pius IX prevented the accomplishment of Rosmini's diplomatic mission.

*Inde irae!* He began to be suspected of liberalism, which at that time in Italy meant patriotism, and his philosophy began to be the object of persistent persecutions. He, however, underwent them, like Soerates, with the grandeur of mind of a genuine philosopher. Finally, he went, weary and disappointed, to seek rest and oblivion in the charming solitude of Stresa, near the Lago Maggiore. There the élite of the learned men of Italy and Europe, as Cardinal Newman, Cardinal Wiseman, Lacordaire, Manzoni, Bonghi, and some others, met together to comfort the good and afflicted heart of the great Italian philosopher.



parently induced by the desire to redeem Italy, but the outcome of their invasion proved to be in open contradiction with the principles of social and international justice, which were heralded by them with the bold and steady conviction that they corresponded to the universal needs and demands of the civilized world. They did not bring, indeed, any remedy to Italy and only sought material profit; but they proclaimed there new social ideas, which aimed at the radical destruction of the whole edifice of the old régime, as well as at the organization of a new life.

Their social gospel regarded all men as equal and free and all nations as mistresses of their own destinies. Accordingly, each nation was suggested to unite its parcelled parties and to form a single and independent state. Such notions, promising universal revival, did not fail to make wonderful and rapid strides all over Europe, while they urged in Italy the development of analogous thoughts and feelings, which were carefully disguised with literary forms. But the new principles of uniform, civil organization which Napoleon I. laid down, gave the Italians the most powerful impulse to their national solidarity. He abolished pernicious privileges all over the peninsula. Establishing a strictly laical authority, he inhibited the influence of clericalism or the religious-factionary control over public education and intellectual life. He ended municipal jealousies, local prejudices, and ancient crystallized traditions. Introducing a civil and penal code, permeated with the spirit of the Roman Law and of universal equality, he supplanted conflicting customs and jurisdictions. By the equal and regular administration of justice, he overthrew the confused and fixed forms of government, of the tenure of land, and of the whole structure of the Italian society, which was based upon feudalism. All those changes, as well as the system of military recruiting, and the construction of new roads and bridges, greatly contributed to unite the minds and hearts of all Italians. Besides, the monuments which were erected to perpetuate the memory of the most glorious events and of the greatest men, and, above all, the ambition of Napoleon to embody the greatness of the Roman empire, as the Pope, the German emperor, the men of the Renaissance, and the glorious Italian republics had endeavored to do before him, could not fail to display the beauty of the deliverance and unity of Italy.<sup>2</sup>

But, after Napoleon's downfall, the whole peninsula and the islands which crown it, were thrown again by the congress of Vienna into the same abject condition in which they were before. They were once more morecellated in small sovereign states, which were

<sup>2</sup> See "*Les Résurrections Italiennes*," by H. Bérenger, E. Pelletan, Ed., Paris, 1911.

enthralled by the despotic control of Austria. Tradition and absolutism were revived by the triumphant reaction.

Napoleon's rule was regarded as an illegal attempt against order, and all his activity as propagation of revolution. Accordingly, social order was thought again to be a natural emanation from absolute government. Legislation began to be directed to check progressive tendencies and every form of revolutionary aspirations. Divine right began to be opposed to natural right, legitimacy to popular sovereignty, the state to the individual, authority to liberty. The clergy resumed its influence upon education, the censorship of the press, and some other offices which gave it control of intellectual and moral life. But the Italy of 1815 was no more the Italy of the ante-Napoleonic period. The "geographic expression" was no more quiescent and inert; on the contrary, it was permeated with a spirit of rebellion and progress. The stream of new ideas which had been brought into the oppressed country from the other nations, whose barriers had been already overthrown by the French wars, could be checked no more. The ferment within the stirred minds was powerful and pregnant with hopes of bright future.

The emancipation, the unity, and the greatness of Italy was already the magnificent ideal which focused all the energies and the heroic efforts of the best Italians; to it everything was devoted and subordinated.

Austria, meanwhile, in her hatred, stopped at no outrage, at no absurdity. She began to see conspiracy and revolution in everything and everywhere, and to suppress all feelings of patriotism and liberty in the whole peninsula. Accordingly, men of elevated mind were thrown into dungeons, or were wrenched out of their beloved country and exiled. And they, guilty only of patriotic love, wandered about over those countries, in which liberty was flourishing, and spread the sad news of their national distress. But Metternich's policy failed to extinguish the fire of rebellion which seemed to be smothered beneath the peaceful aspect of the Italian peninsula, though it still raged, like the lava under the picturesque sides of its volcanoes. Under the pressure of the persistent and brutal reaction and of the sad common experience, the vision of the national ideal became more distinct and suggestive than before. The Italian people strained its powers and brought all its possibilities to its richest unfolding. The oppressed minds seemed to be revived and inspired by the spirit of the Renaissance, which conveyed the suggestion that human personality is the source of all activities and achievements. In every province of life there was a momentous awakening. The life of the Italian race reached the moment of *experimentum crucis*. Now the problem upon which the universal in-



terest focused was not merely the emancipation and unity of Italy, but the future of her culture and civilization, in harmony with the spirit of her glorious traditions, which was threatened by her tyrannical rulers. So vital a problem evoked and concentrated all social and intellectual forces. It was a moment of great unrest and of intense elaboration of means and schemes. From the powerful fermentation of ideas three main currents of thought emerged for the salvation of the country. Men of different mental attitudes agreed in the diagnosis of the unbearable conditions of Italy; they were all determined not to sit upon her ruins and weep and lament like Jeremiah. But they were united in the common desire of driving away the hated foreigner, who was recognized as the sole cause of the distress of their beloved country. They were, however, divided in regard to the means to be used and to the method of organizing the new Italy. Some put their hope in the house of Savoy. Others thought to have found the panacea of all evils in a confederation of all the Italian states with the Pope as its chief. Such a plan was the outcome of two main factors. The congress of Vienna and the general tendency of minds in all Europe, permeated by the romantic spirit, called out the revival of Catholicism. In Italy, many learned men who did not wish to part asunder their love of the Church and their love of country were fascinated by the memory of the medieval commonwealths which were united under the protecting power of the Pope.

Besides, convinced that the unity of Italy could not be achieved by revolution, they advocated the conciliation of all forces and elements, of papacy and monarchy, of liberty and civil progress, as the most effective method of national regeneration and organization.

Mazzini's "Young Italy" stood in opposition to the other parties. He urged the Italians to join his association "in the firm intent of consecrating both thought and action to the great aim of reconstructing Italy as one independent sovereign nation of free men and equals." Education and insurrection were the means he suggested. But, beyond his own country, he looked to mankind. The idea of nationality was, according to him, the necessary lever for the realization of the cosmopolitan ideal of an international revolution and republic.

With the ascent of Pius IX. to the throne of St. Peter, the conciliatory tendency seemed to prevail over the others. While through all Europe liberalism and reaction were still in conflict, the election of such a Pope seemed to be a tribute to the national feeling of the Italians. The head of the Church, usually reproached with complicity in reviving what was already dead, and in killing what was quite alive, showed that he appreciated indeed patriotism, which

was still regarded as a crime and condemned by the Austrian bishops as the work of the devil. The Pope's liberal tendencies could not fail to foster the kindled flame of patriotic love and to unite all the Italians in the common purpose. Their enthusiasm culminated in a general cry for war against the oppressing foreigner. During those momentous days, for the first time in the history of civilized countries, Plato's ideal form of government seemed to be realized in some aspects; the political attitude, under the pressure of circumstances, became quite philosophical.

Rosmini, Gioberti, Mamiani, the most prominent leaders in the movement of thought, forgot their philosophical controversies which had hitherto divided them, and devoted their common efforts to the interest of their country. Gioberti sent our philosopher to Rome as ambassador of Piedmont to induce the Pope, whose constitutional minister was Mamiani, to take part in the war against Austria and to establish the basis of an Italian confederation. But Rosmini's mission failed, because of the reaction which once more prevailed all over Italy. Both the method of revolutionary action and of the impossible idealistic confederation, however, which proved to be only factors of bitter and general disappointment, were replaced by Cavour's diplomacy. He cleverly broke the dream of a reconciliation which was based upon impossible compromises of principles, tendencies, and attitudes, profoundly diverse, and gave the national party a new direction based upon reciprocal liberty of state and religion. He thus initiated the achievement of the political synthesis of the new Italy, free, independent, and united, as she was wished to be by her sons and by the learned abroad. But Rosmini had not the joy of seeing the final phase of so long and so epic a struggle, to which he had devoted his manifold activity, his health, and reputation.

## 2. *Intellectual Conditions*

The powerful political action which the Italians displayed for the radical reconstruction of their country was in intimate and organic connection with the unfolding of their mental forces.

An action so complex and of such high practical importance could not fail to focus the general attention and provoke reflective thought. It involved, indeed, the necessity of criticizing the old and of developing a new intellectual life. The possibility of its successful issues depended upon changing habits of mind, modes of individual conduct, and forms of social life. It had to be justified and strengthened with theoretical demonstrations of its justice and of its conformity with the principles of human nature and of modern thought.

Besides, the new ideas, the new scientific principles, which had to be the determining and controlling factors of the national thinking and willing, could not but be clothed with abstract forms, because only such forms could escape political censure. The magnificent and promising mental activity of the Renaissance, which had made Italy the cradle of modern thought, was followed by two centuries of intellectual tyranny and slumber. The religious reaction and the deadening influence of Spanish bigotry had endeavored to check the new stream of free and independent thought, and to paralyze the germs of a new life.

But at the end of the eighteenth century, Italy was again animated by the spirit of Dante and the Renaissance, and emerged from her long intellectual depression and lassitude. She entered then into the general movement of modern thought, to which she had already given the very first vital impetus.

It was natural that the Italians should feel impelled, while under the hated foreign yoke, to concentrate all their mental activities upon the reconstruction of their country, like the prisoners who, groaning under the weight of chains, long for liberty and concentrate all their efforts upon attaining it. The Italians indeed began to keep thought and action in persistent unity, until their patriotic hopes and struggles were crowned with success. Accordingly, since that very time, they began to display the same eager desire, the same method, to vindicate, to magnify, and to convert all the memories of their glorious past into a living motor force. They endeavored, impelled by a feeling of national pride, to restore the value of their culture, and to impress a national mark upon politics, art, literature, and philosophy. They did not fail, however, to throw open their minds and hearts to all the invigorating influence which came to them from foreign countries. They became, under the pressure of their awful experiences, more sensible to the beauty and wealth of thought, ancient as well as modern, which was contained either in foreign literatures, full already of juvenile vigor, or in their own. The function of literature and art became civil and patriotic. Lyric and dramatic poetry assumed an aggressive attitude against the evils which the country had so long endured. Tragedies were more or less disguised battles against any kind of despotism and tyranny; they aimed to stimulate national feeling by revealing upon the stage past injustices, by exalting deeds of national heroism, and by reviving Roman ideas of liberty, of justice, and of respect for human dignity. Satiric poetry took on a social and civil significance; it was an embellished protest against the excessive inequality between the rich and the poor, and a defense of the people trampled and dejected. Painting and sculpture revived and embodied what



could foster the consciousness of greatness. Music, through its suggestive and universal language, displayed the anguish and the hopes of all Italians. They made historical researches, not for the sake of curiosity, but because they were anxious to indicate the factors of their national misfortune, and to find in the past the flame of enthusiasm and the experiences of their ancestors, which could be translated into working forces.

The very dawn of the new intellectual life was, indeed, characterized by the critical examination of the ideas they found current and by a great interest in knowledge. Knowledge began to be regarded as a social power and as determining factor in the movement of national regeneration. They made scientific investigations to find useful truths, to modify, through experimental methods, mental habits, and thus to divert men from the frivolous life of the time and to bring them to serious reflection. Through inner regeneration, through a peaceful and normal intellectual evolution, through a national unity of mental life, they wanted to change the distressing conditions of the country. Thus the motive, which began to control the evolution of the new intellectual life, was quite practical and determined scientific work. From the beginning, the reflection upon the ideas which permeated social and individual life could afford no satisfaction. The common experience of public life could not fail to focus the attention of all upon civil laws. These were said to be an emanation from the invisible and eternal will, but proved to be the outcome of the deification of crystallized truths, of hereditary prejudices, and of changeless oppressive political systems, as well as the genuine work of the personal interest of rulers. Such laws were of no public advantage, they did not satisfy any practical need or demand; nay, they were factors in the national oppression and general unhappiness. Accordingly, accommodation to them seemed to be cowardly and shameful. Wavering confidence in the practical value of obedience to them inevitably and fatally implied an attack upon the validity of their ground. The same political situation was bound to undermine also the principles of morality, which controlled individual conduct and required the subservience to tyrannical laws and systems.

These laws were based no less upon tradition than authority, and thus they seemed also to perpetuate the unhappy conditions of the country. Many factors happened to subserve the critical and destructive attitude the Italians assumed while confronting the political problem, which involved their individual and social happiness. Authority more and more lost respect, because it was regarded as oppressive. Tradition lost the influence it had exerted upon the

national mind, because it suggested always changeless forms of impossible life.

Religious feeling wavered because the Church in Italy was, at that time, identified in the mind of the people with the prevailing political tyranny. And finally the contact with French culture permeated with revolutionary ideas contributed also to foster the feeling of rebellion against the old standards of life and fossilized beliefs.

The outcome of such great fermentation of new ideas was moral disintegration, political unrest, and skepticism. The pressure of political activity which imposed profound intellectual revolutions did not make skepticism merry, as in France during the eighteenth century, but anxious to reconstruct knowledge, already regarded as a great dynamic agency in the political regeneration of Italy. The emphasis, however, upon the practical significance of knowledge made necessary critical insight into its origin and nature. Political action required a philosophical background.

Whence the crucial question rose whether experience or the mind had to be held as the source of knowledge and consequently of ideas, which are its constituent elements; whether ideas had to be considered as innate or as the product of sensations. This problem was regarded, in Italy as well as throughout Europe, at that time, as the most fundamental problem, and was justly placed in the foreground of philosophical discussion. For its solution had to furnish the basis of moral and political sciences which were expected to enlighten and sustain the national movement. In fact, the innateness of ideas meant the previous existence of *a priori* controlling principles. Accordingly, the national thinking and will, knowledge and action, had to be controlled by abstract, eternal, and crystalized notions, as during the long years of unchanged slavery. Ideals and laws had to be regarded as eternally given, and consequently there was no hope of reference to the concrete conditions, of political change, freedom, and progress.

On the contrary, the belief that ideas were the outcome of ever-changing personal experience involved the conviction that human personality must have a conscious participation in the creation of truths, ideals, and laws, with absolute independence of every external authority. Thus the individual, reckoning the changed condition, was able to direct his own conduct and become a decisive factor in the regeneration and reconstruction of Italy. The philosophy of experience which based knowledge and morality solely upon perception, proclaimed the right of individualism and of rebellion against intellectual and political oppression as well as against every form of despotism, and thus it best responded to the urgent needs



and demands of the second half of the eighteenth century and of the early part of the nineteenth century. Of course, the interest in the experimental and positive sciences, the closer contact with the English and French literatures permeated with the spirit of modern philosophy, the loosened respect for tradition, the declining influence of the Church, the decreased feeling of the supernatural, the conviction, also, that idealism, allied with religious and civil authority, was an instrument of reaction, but, above all, the personal presence of Condillac,<sup>3</sup> were so many factors which contributed to condition and assure the prevalence of empiricism in Italy.

Gerdil,<sup>4</sup> indeed, endeavored to oppose to it a form of idealism permeated with the doctrines of Plato, St. Augustine, and Descartes, but his efforts were frustrated by the practical significance and compromise of idealism, holding fixed, innate controlling principles of individual and social ethics, and by the rapid translation of Condillac's works as well as by the teaching of Soave, who followed and exalted Locke as the greatest metaphysician since he had dared "to destroy the chimera of innate ideas."<sup>5</sup>

Colleges and universities welcomed the new philosophy, because it seemed to answer the pressing political purpose of that historical moment and to be in harmony with the intellectual temper and with the history of the philosophical thought of the Italians.<sup>6</sup>

Art and literature endeavored to assimilate and apply its principles which, spread in diluted form, could not fail to filter through the strata of national consciousness and conduct.<sup>7</sup>

The fact that Condillac and Soave were priests, and that the

<sup>3</sup> Condillac lived ten years (1758-1768) in Parma, at that time the "rendez-vous" of the best intelligences, as tutor of the young Duc Ferdinand of Bourbon.

<sup>4</sup> Sigismond Card. Gerdil (1718-1802) published a great number of philosophical works in French, Italian, and Latin. See Bouillier, "Histoire de la philosophie cartésienne," t. II., ch. XXVIII.; Ueberweg's "Hist. of Phil.," Vol. II., page 480.

<sup>5</sup> Soave translated into Italian first Dr. Winne's summary of Locke's celebrated "Essay," and later published a complete translation in the "Collezione dei Classici Metafisici" in Pavia (1819). His "Istituzioni di Logica, Metafisica e Morale" was used as a text-book of philosophy in many colleges. He was professor of philosophy in the Brera college in Milan. Let us notice here that he, like Condillac, was a catholic priest.

<sup>6</sup> What is the national characteristic of Italian philosophy? According to Ferri ("Essai sur l'Histoire de la Philosophie en Italie au Dix Neuvième Siècle," Vol. II., page 343), the Italian mind, although fond of experience and life, has manifested a tendency to idealism; according to P. Ragnisco (*Rivista di Filosofia*, Vol. 3, 1911, page 698) the proper characteristic of Italian philosophy is naturalism.

<sup>7</sup> Foscolo, Leopardi, Giordani, Count L. Cicognara ("Del Bello"), Cesarotti ("Saggio sulla filosofia delle lingue"), Costa ("Del modo di comporre le idee"), and some others wrote under the influence of the new philosophy.

Jesuit order, whose influence was so powerful, strongly favored the imported philosophy, helped its rapid spread. It was thought that faith and ethics would not be affected by the principles of empiricism. Strange irony of history! The most striking characteristics of the empirical movement in England, where it was born, as well as in France, where it had been imported by such men as Montesquien and Voltaire, were disregard for positive religion and opposition to the traditional beliefs presented to individuals through the medium of organized society. The antagonism to innate ideas meant opposition to the blind, undisputed reception of old ideas, and eager desire for independent critical examination. Besides, the theory of transformed sensations assumed the denial of every authority, either religious or political, leaving conventions and facts depending upon man's imagination and will. But the new theory seemed to be in Italy an auxiliary, practical standpoint and a provisional method for political activity rather than a fixed and definite philosophical position. The evolving of political conditions gradually modified the strict empiristic attitude. The most prominent philosophers preceding Rosmini, as Gioja, Romagnosi, and Galluppi, although contemporary, formed a rhythmic movement of philosophical thought. They lacked the originality and boldness which had characterized the Italian philosophy of the Renaissance, and neglected the fresh thought of the great Vico, who was "the nineteenth century in germ,"<sup>8</sup> but displayed the same enthusiasm for the new philosophy of experience. They were permeated with the spirit of the Enlightenment, and their main interest was accordingly in the problem of knowledge and in the organization of a just social order. Thus philosophy came to be regarded, as amongst the ancient Greeks, as a social power, as a determining factor in political reconstruction, and dependent upon the demands of practical, and in particular, of political life. It assumed, then, an essentially human direction and its original mission.<sup>9</sup>

They all betrayed, however, the same aversion for the violent breaking from religious tradition as well as the same fear of the moral consequences which could be inferred from the current philosophy: whence the same preoccupation we find in all for reconciliation, the same endeavor to fuse together the two great streams of thought which derived from England and France, and to harmonize, even in spite of patent inconsistency, idealism and empiricism or sensationalism, Descartes and Locke or Condillae.

<sup>8</sup> See B. Croce, "La Filosofia di G. Vico," page 248, Bari, G. Laterza, 1911. English translation by R. G. Collingwood.

<sup>9</sup> Windelband, "History of Philosophy," page 68; Dewey, "Essays," p. 21.



According to Gioja,<sup>10</sup> the function of philosophy is to rule the whole of human activity for the sake of universal happiness. Accordingly, he thought that its business was the defence of human rights and the promotion of social wealth and the control of social ethics, which involves hygiene, politeness, and intellectual education. He related all inner phenomena to sensations, and sensations to the senses. But he recognized within us a certain inner activity which he called "the moving force of the soul"; this is the source of all changes, either internal or external.

Romagnosi<sup>11</sup> thought that the theory of empiricism and the theory of innate ideas could be reconciled by recognizing within our mind, above mere sensation, a peculiar natural power, endowed with an activity of its own, which he called "*sensu logico*." The function of the logical sense which is prior to the affirmation and negation of our judgments, is to perceive in sensation, in the world of phenomena, the supersensible element, the element of intelligibility which is the being and the activity of things "*l'essere ed il fare delle cose*." Thus, according to him, being and causality only are intelligible or objects of our understanding. The object of the rational sense is the idea, the intelligible, the being, not sensations, which only furnish our mind with occasions to exercise its logical sense. So his teaching marked an almost complete divorce from Locke and Condillae and a definite step in a transition from empiricism to idealism.

Galluppi<sup>12</sup> assumed a different philosophical attitude towards the problems which the pressure of political conditions and the general intellectual movement of Europe brought to the foreground of philosophical interest. His teaching marked, indeed, a very important stage in the movement of philosophical thought in Italy. For he was the first to understand and welcome the revolution brought into philosophy by Kant, and to awaken the minds of his own countrymen from their dogmatic slumber and from their fond attachment to sensualism or rationalism by pointing out to them the necessity of critical investigation.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Melchiorre-Gioja (1767-1829). See Ueberweg, "History of Philosophy," Vol. II., pages 483-484; Ferri, *Histoire de la Philosophie en Italie au XIX<sup>me</sup> siècle*, Vol. I.

<sup>11</sup> G. Domenico Romagnosi (1761-1835). See Ueberweg, *op. cit.*, pages 484-85, Vol. II.; Ferri, *op. cit.*, Vol. I.

<sup>12</sup> Baron Pasquale Galluppi (1770-1846). See Ferri and Ueberweg, *op. cit.*; R. Mariano, "La Philosophie contemporaine en Italie," 1868; Pallhorès, "La Théorie Idéologique de Galluppi," Paris, Alcan, 1908.

<sup>13</sup> Kant's philosophy was known in Italy through two books published in French, i. e., "Philosophie de Kant, ou principes fondamentaux de la philosophie transcendente," par Ch. Villers, Metz, 1801, and "Essai d'une exposition

His works are pervaded by both conflicting tendencies, empiricist and rationalist. He aimed at the reform of philosophy, and accordingly endeavored to correct empiricism and Kantism, but he proved to be unable to extricate himself entirely from both philosophies, in which he found a valuable treasure for his own elaboration.

Knowledge and action, according to him, or thought, its elements, functions, and value for truth and good, are the main subject-matter of philosophy. He was aware that the problem of knowledge was in his day "the object of meditation in all Europe," and upon this problem he focused his attention. Against sensationalism he held that the mind is not only sensitive, but intelligent and reasonable, and made the distinction between sense and intelligence, sensation and thought. Against Condillae he stated that our mind is something more than a mere collection of internal states; that it is a reality, a being, a substance, endowed with the power of analysis and synthesis. He rejected innate ideas in the sense of ideas prior to sensations and independent of all experience, but he accepted them in the sense of natural ideas, or ideas for whose acquisition we have a natural disposition, "*una virtualità naturale*." Galluppi agreed with Kant that knowledge is a combination of subjective and objective elements, but he found Kant's form and matter equally subjective, and hence the failure to solve the problem of knowledge. The crucial point is to determine what is objective and subjective in knowledge. We find objective elements only in the immediate contact of the self with reality or in primitive experience; reflective experience which is based upon ideal synthesis is the outcome of the objective elements given by sensations and of the subjective elements produced by the mind itself. This was the solution which Galluppi gave the great problem of critical philosophy. His teaching, characterized by simple and attractive eloquence, permeated by the principles of the Kantian and of the Scottish school, and involving the suggestion to descend from theology to psychology, from nature to humanity, from abstractions to facts, provoked a great interest in philosophy amongst the Italians, and seemed to the national party to be a powerful instrument of political action and easy to be assimilated by the people because stripped of the obsolete and dry scholastic form.

But during the time of his teaching important new political changes which affected Italy as well as all Europe, brought out *succinte de la critique de la raison pure de Kant*,'' par M. Kinker, traduit du hollandais par J. Le Fr., Amsterdam, 1801. The first Italian translation of the Critique of Pure Reason was published by Mantovani, in 1821 and 1822. Galluppi examined Kantian philosophy in detail.



changes of intellectual attitude. When the revolutionary storm was over, a reaction was inevitable. Admiration for the preceding intellectual movement changed to aversion and hatred. Reason was held responsible for the violence done to political and religious enemies. "Philosophy" was blamed for the general unrest and disorder. The French Revolution, welcomed at the beginning as a manifestation of reason and the triumph of man, stripped of religious preoccupations, culminated in excesses of bloody violence. Its issue was a manifest confession of impotence for constructive purposes and social peace. Empiricism transformed into sensualism, naturalism changed into materialism, deism degenerated into atheism, enthusiastic morals sunk into egoistic morals, proved to be unable to settle the questions which were so closely connected with individual and social happiness. The nations of Europe whose barriers had been overthrown amongst the vicissitudes of the revolutionary wars could already freely communicate with one another, fuse together their ideas, and thus participate in a general culture, but they longed for peace and order, for a new source of life, and for a new system of ideas and purposes. So it happened that the general feeling against the violence and destructions of the Revolution, the over-excitement and exhaustion produced by sensualistic excesses, the impuissance of the rationalistic and materialistic "philosophism" to reform society, the universal eager desire of a new center of gravitation, the same programme of the "Holy Alliance" which heralded the reconstruction of moral order and the regeneration of the political system of Europe on the basis of Christianity and thus the revival of religion, and finally the triumphant return of the Pope to Rome, evoked a spiritualistic reaction. The romantic movement favored the revival of the Christian religion. For it appealed to spontaneity, sensibility, feeling, emotion, and enthusiasm which are the main religious factors, and while revelling in the vast world of the unknown as well as in a new realm of marvels and mysteries, it evoked the Middle Ages in which Christianity and papacy had predominated. Besides, the satisfaction of esthetic feeling which the dominant religion afforded, the romantic conception of Christianity as perfectly compatible with the highest intellectual culture, contributed to present as "ultimatum" to the convulsed society the religion against which the revolutionary fury had been directed.

Thus, "through a common movement," says Taine, "along the whole line of human thought, causes draw back into an abstract region, where philosophy had not been to search them out for eighteen centuries. Then was manifest the disease of the age, the restlessness of Werther and Faust, very like that which in a similar mo-





ment agitated men eighteen centuries ago: I mean, discontent with the present, the vague desire of a higher beauty, and an ideal happiness, the painful aspiration for the infinite."<sup>14</sup>

But then arose in Italy the question whether or not the whole heritage of the eighteenth century had to be rejected, which age of Italian history had to be copied; whether the genuine greatness of Italy had to be founded on the revival of the age of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, when social life and human personality were free and independent of supernatural preoccupation, and the Italians enjoyed a spiritual unity of knowledge and will; or on the revival of the Middle Ages, when the intimate union of Church and monarchy, of religion and authority, of faith and reason, of theology and philosophy, prevailed.

Men who were imbued with the spirit of classicism and of the eighteenth-century culture, took the former alternative. Those whose enthusiasm was directed towards romanticism wanted the life of the new Italy to be a continuity of the harmony of all social forces. They displayed, nevertheless, great sympathy for all modern aspirations, and endeavored to subserve their national cause by spreading, under an evangelical disguise, forbidden ideas of liberty, patriotism, and universal equality.

The conciliatory tendency was bound to prevail, under the pressure of religious and national enthusiasm. Such a tendency, together with the influence of the reactionary and theological, and of the psychologico-spiritualistic movement in France, and the powerful impulse from Germany to construct gigantic systems in order to have a comprehensive view of spiritual life, could not fail to provoke in Italy a philosophy which, by an encyclopedic synthesis should seek to unite all intellectual efforts for the sake of a common national action. The genius of Rosmini provided the needed philosophical formula of universal harmony, source of truth, and morality, of reciprocal respect and love, of social justice and individual rights, as symbol of the coming national unity.

<sup>14</sup> "History of English Literature," Book IV., Ch. I.

## CHAPTER II

### ROSMINI'S PERSONALITY

#### 1. *Rosmini's Psychological Dispositions*

AN extraordinary hunger for learning associated with a powerful intelligence, a pronounced religious tendency, and a deep feeling of sympathy for men were the important features of Rosmini's psychological inheritance. These native dispositions were developed by the social environment in which he was reared, and exerted a constant influence on his mental activity. His early tuition as well as his academic course was permeated with religious ideals. The atmosphere which he and the learned men with whom he was in continuous intercourse breathed was pervaded by religious reaction against the movement of modern thought, regarded as the main factor of social disturbance. Accordingly, his mind did not escape habits of analogous thinking, feeling, and acting, and partaking of the prevailing reactionary aim and disposition of his times and class.

The silent, beautiful scenes of immensity and mystery which the snowy Alps display provoked the eager mind of the young Rosmini to wonder and philosophy. We are told, indeed, that he began very early to incline to the investigation of truth, and to display a striking tendency to moralize. While he was a boy, playing the game of "policeman," or "catch thief," he preferred the part of judge to every other, for he liked to pose as a "wise man," and to give good advice to his little friends.

We are told also that the young thinker surprised his tutor with his advanced philosophical knowledge. Just when the good teacher judged his pupil able to be initiated in the philosophy of empiricism, he discovered that he did not need to be taught philosophy, for he knew enough and mastered Aquinas's "Summa." The precocious philosopher showed at an early age that he felt the great importance of "the queen and mother of all sciences"; philosophy was always the subject of his conversations and letters. He was so enamored of the study of philosophy, that he spent much of his youth and of the rest of his stormy life in devotion to it.

"Philosophy and the contemplation of nature," he said, "far

from wearying us, form such an agreeable recreation that I should not be disposed to sacrifice it for any other."<sup>1</sup>

"Day and night," he said, "I roamed through flowery paths, as it were, in the vast demesne of philosophical lore, feeling all that joy which the first aspect of truth infuses into the soul, feeling that security which borders on hardihood, feeling those indefinite hopes peculiar to youth when for the first time turning, with elevated and conscious reflections, to the universe and its Creator, thinking to absorb the one and the other as easily as we breathe."<sup>2</sup>

We are told that no difficulty daunted him; nay, difficulties inflamed his ardor, because in every difficulty he saw a secret calculated to arouse his curiosity, a treasure to discover. Such intellectual enthusiasm actuated him to read all the ancient, medieval, and modern philosophers, and to collect together the many scattered fragments of truth he found in their works. It is said of him that like an industrious bee, he went everywhere in quest of honey, and wherever he found any, he drew it forth. Thus here and there, the shadow of some antecedent philosophy can be retraced in his works, but he was a disciple of nobody. His immense philosophical elaboration had as its source only his intellectual and moral temper, his native genius as well as his mental habits, molded as they were by his social environment.

The bent and disposition of Rosmini's mind converged not only towards contemplation, but toward action as well. He was animated by altruistic feelings; he felt impelled to communicate his ideas to his fellow-men.

For he was convinced that high intellectual culture is refining and ennobling, and to discover truth means to discover the means of moral progress. It filled him with pain "to think that truths excellent in themselves and congenial to the human intelligence should be monopolized by a small circle of individuals, as though none but themselves had a right to possess them."<sup>3</sup>

And referring to the Scholastic attitude he says, "Is there not something odious and hurtful to human feeling in a science which, under the pretence of being scholastic, envelops itself in mystery; which seems to hate the light of day; which wears all the appearance of a sect, with a language, or rather jargon, of its own, and forbidden to the rest of men, and which assumes an ambitious, or

<sup>1</sup> Impelled by the desire of spreading philosophical knowledge, he formed an academy of young philosophers in his house. The members of the new academy, eager to imitate the Peripatetics, indulged in philosophical discussions, wandering about the charming surroundings of Rovereto.

<sup>2</sup> "Introduzione alla filosofia."

<sup>3</sup> "The Origin of Ideas," Vol. I., Ch. III., §36.



at least a strange and exclusive tone, as if it had some great secret to conceal, or some dark ends to accomplish?"<sup>4</sup>

Thus, Rosmini could not conceive philosophy divorced from human affairs and interests. "Why," he asks, "should this science, which boasts of being the mother of all the arts, keep itself aloof from, and sullenly refuse to hold friendly intercourse with, the human family? Has it, then, like some beasts of a new species, impenetrable lairs, where to abide in solitude, from fear lest its interests should suffer by being mixed up with those of the world at large? Or has heaven bestowed the gift of reason on a few individuals only? And shall, therefore, the great bulk of mankind forever have to be led, like a flock of sheep, by the command or the rod of those favored ones? Must men be for everlasting debarred from judging in a body or pronouncing on matters on which their own dignity and happiness depend?"<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, "a good instinct" of his nature irresistibly prompted him to applaud "intentions so humane, and to feel the liveliest gratitude for those who labor with the intent of placing the very highest truths within the reach of the greatest number. . . . For if this were well and successfully done, the masses would be able to enjoy in some way the lovable aspect of those truths, and would rise to a better condition."<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, he thought that the masses, by bringing their collective judgment to bear on the interminable disputations of the learned, might, perhaps, speak out with such an overwhelming weight of authority as would effectually recall these disputants to more profitable occupations and sounder ways of thinking, and to work for the true benefit of the individual and society. Rosmini, persuaded of the social and humane mission of philosophy, could not fail to direct his attention to the national problem, which was already the focus of the general intellectual activity. He, in fact, like the élite of his time, did not make a mystery of his love for the common mother, the beloved from whom he had had "life and language."<sup>7</sup>

Eye-witness of the violences perpetrated by the French armies as well as of the angry despotism of the restored governments, he grieved over Italy's unhappy state and longed for the freedom, independence, and unity, which he openly proclaimed to be "a universal cry" that set throbbing the heart of every Italian.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "The Origin of Ideas," *loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> "The Origin of Ideas," *loc. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> "The Origin of Ideas," *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> See "Nuovo Saggio sull'origine delle idee," preface.

<sup>8</sup> See "Discorso sull'Unità d'Italia."

It seems, however, that Rosmini was distressed rather by the moral disintegration than by the political situation of his country. All his works, in fact, betray a strong moral preoccupation and a persistent endeavor to point out moral reconstruction as a factor of social happiness. But the Church's declining influence, above everything else, attracted his attention. His native religious bias, under the constant influence of his social environment, became a deep and inalterable love for his parents' religion. And to such a love the Italian philosopher subordinated his whole intellectual activity. Thus, it was inevitable that a life of earnest and close adhesion to his religion would have created in his mind habits of intellectual submission and criticism not at all independent and impartial. Besides, his works bespeak his fondness for abstract, fixed, and eternal principles, his idealistic tendency, his dogmatic affirmation, his conviction of the necessity of universals, his determination to organize an absolute system, and consequently, his rationalistic type of mind.<sup>9</sup>

## *2. Rosmini's Leading Motive, Attitude, and Method*

Rosmini seemed to be convinced of the fact that the growing individualism, the ascending democracy, the progress of national feeling, and, finally, the intellectual undercurrents of social life had already brought into question the ancient beliefs and moral standards, and that even the position of the Catholic Church had been compromised, being thrown by clericalism into the political turmoil of the times. He, accordingly, felt stimulated to bring his contribution to the political, intellectual, and moral reconstruction of his beloved country. Impelled by a motive so eminently practical, he applied his mind to an etiological inquiry into the actual conditions of the Church, of Italy, and of philosophy.

Under the pressure of his native dispositions, acquired habits, intellectual temper, and of the dominant current of thought, permeated with spiritualism and religion, the Italian philosopher found out that the divorce of the Church from social and political aspirations, of faith from reason, of theology from philosophy, was the main factor in the restlessness of his social environment. He, therefore, urged the reconciliation of all the intellectual and social forces as the panacea for all the evils of his times. Besides, agreeing with the prevailing romantic spirit, he pointed to the Middle Ages as the epoch in which the ideal reconciliation he dreamed of, the genuine greatness of Papacy and of Italy, and the lofty task of

<sup>9</sup> See W. James, "Pragmatism," pages 7, 51; "Some Problems of Philosophy," page 35.



philosophy, were fully realized. His discovery, indeed, could not be otherwise! But Rosmini thought that such harmonious union had been shattered by the movement of modern philosophy. According to him, philosophy "from Locke to Kant, in spite of so many efforts, went on wandering farther and farther astray, and entangling itself in its very progress, until men grew weary of it, and lost all faith in doctrines that were continually changing."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, he believed that reason was tossed about by the waves of skepticism and opinion, and that there was no longer faith in any universally valid truth, or in the possibility of any certain knowledge, while respect for authority and tradition sank, religious feelings and ideals wavered, and individuals governed themselves.

Sensationalism and subjectivism, indeed, acknowledging no essential objectivity of ideas and then no objective measure of truth, and relying only on the relativity of individual ideas, built human knowledge as well as ethical principles upon a relativism of individual opinions, and, consequently, upon the insecurity of change and caprice. This philosophical attitude and its inevitable consequence, the absolute independence of the individual in the theoretical and practical sphere, and "the deification of human faculties and affections" plainly proclaimed by Kantian doctrine, hurt Rosmini's religious feeling, for they meant a mortal blow to religious tradition and to organized authority. Thus he felt that there was "a yearning for the invaluable boon of a true and sound philosophy," and that the yearning was due to the uncertain utterances and to the imperfect and unsatisfactory systems which philosophers had already propounded.

Rosmini was penetrated with the importance of philosophy because of its all-embracing influence, determining the source of knowledge, and thus making all sciences dependent on itself. Besides, philosophy, in his opinion, has an anthropological, a social, and a religious mission, since it is the interpreter of nature as well as of the wishes of the human heart, and it unites men amongst themselves and with their Creator. Finally, it aims at the betterment of men by discovering and transforming truth into reality, and by leading to good and to virtue, as to their natural end.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, for Rosmini, the restoration of philosophy was an urgent need, and it could not be achieved without a firm epistemological ground.

Rosmini, agreeing with Locke and Kant, was impressed from his early youth, by the practical importance of the problem of

<sup>10</sup> "Theodicy," Ch. XXIX, No. 148. Longmans, Green, and Company, New York, 1912.

<sup>11</sup> See "Introduzione alla filosofia."

knowledge. He justly recognized that the most urgent question to be solved in philosophy was whether, above and beyond individual opinions and purposes, there is anything universally valid, true, and right in itself; whether our ideas have a really objective value and provide a firm basis for knowledge and morality; whether at that time of political and moral unrest there could be found a basis for common truth and good which might become a ground of a social agreement and political cooperation. According to our philosopher, the science of individual and social ethics, law, government, education, which the political situation threw into the front rank of intellectual interests; man's faith in absolute justice; the changeless right of nations to political independence and liberty; the necessity of suppressing despotism as well as rebellion; had to rest upon a knowledge, not transient and relative, but stable and unchangeable. Such a knowledge, however, must have for its basis, not the chance ideas furnished by sense-experience, but the ideal order, "the innate idea of the universal which is the truly real;" it must rest "on an object," says Rosmini, "which is always before us, necessary, universal, and independent of us and all created things."<sup>12</sup>

The persistent effort to indicate the idea of the universal as source of objective and absolute truth, as nucleus of the new national mental and moral life, as point of centralization of intellectual and political activity, meant the accumulation of individual energies, the absorption and submission of the individual to organized society as well as to the common supreme ideal of national solidarity and unity, and constitutes the essential characteristic of Rosmini's philosophy.

The mental attitude Rosmini assumed towards the philosophical problems which his contemporaries confronted was religious and reactionary, but softened by a spirit of conciliation that was in the air. He seemed to be determined to revive the attitude of the Holy Fathers, who did not hesitate to avail themselves of whatsoever truth the systems of pagan philosophers contained in order to secure rational support for their beliefs.

But our philosopher, like them, wanted to subordinate knowledge to the lofty ends of faith, reason to revelation, philosophy to theology, science to dogma. Besides, he endeavored to bring Christianity as an efficient factor into philosophical speculation, and thus to harmonize natural and supernatural truths. Convinced that the most striking characteristics of every true and efficient philosophical system are "unity and totality," he built, like his contemporary German philosophers, a gigantic system in which he thought it possible to take in at a glance, almost all truths, arranged in a scheme

<sup>12</sup> "The Origin of Ideas," No. 1037, Vol. II.

of beautiful unity, and enhanced with new life by "the evidence of a supreme principle."<sup>13</sup>

But in one point Rosmini gladly agreed with modern philosophers, namely, in the method to be used in philosophy, that is, a method which starts from facts. He found, however, that "modern philosophers have contented themselves with analyzing the faculties of the soul, and have paid little attention to the analysis of their product, *i. e.*, human cognitions."<sup>14</sup>

According to him, the right method is to observe what is given by our corporeal senses and at the same time the facts of our inner life and then to accept impartially the legitimate consequences of the same.<sup>15</sup>

Our philosopher, however, almost exclusively employed the synthetic method and thus replaced the concrete by the abstract, the fact by the idea, the internal observation by *a priori* reasoning, making the study of man depend on metaphysics. He preferred deduction to induction, the *a priori* to direct observation, reasoning to experience. He proved, indeed, to be a psychologist, but he often resorted to hypothesis rather than to analysis, to syllogism rather than to experiment.

### 3. *The Fundamental Principle of Rosmini's Philosophy*

"Unity and totality" is, according to Rosmini, the main characteristic of a true and efficient philosophy.<sup>16</sup> This characteristic, which we find in the contemporary romantic philosophy, he endeavored to stamp upon his own. Accordingly, he elaborated his ethical and theoretical doctrine in close connection; his ideology and ethics are so interrelated that the one lends light to the other. Thus, the distinctive marks of the leading principles of his ethical theory can not be given apart from the general principles of his philosophy.

As we have seen, Rosmini, under the pressure of Italy's political and moral problem thought that the main business of philosophy was to build human knowledge upon a fixed basis, and thus to check the deplored outcome of skepticism and materialism, and, by placing reason in opposition to opinion, to overcome anarchical change which sensationalism and empiricism favored. But, according to him, as well as to Kant, the difficulty of the problem of knowledge lies in the possibility of the first judgment. Knowledge is judgment, and then the analysis of the first knowledge or judgment is the first step in every serious philosophical research. Now, the essence of judgment

<sup>13</sup> See "Introduzione alla filosofia."

<sup>14</sup> "The Origin of Ideas," No. 410.

<sup>15</sup> "Theodicy," No. 138, Vol. I.

<sup>16</sup> See "Introduzione alla filosofia."



consists in the union of a subject individual and of a predicate, of a particular idea and of a universal idea. Thus every judgment supposes a universal idea. Experience gives us particular ideas or the matter of knowledge. The universal idea, however, or the form can derive neither from sense-experience, for this happens within the sphere of contingent facts and reaches nothing beyond the individual, nor from reflection, which is an operation of the mind, and every intellectual operation is a judgment. The exclusion of these two possibilities, the former as insufficient, and the latter as forming a vicious circle, leaves one last hypothesis, namely, that the universal idea is prior, that is, innate. Thus within human reason there is at least a notion which is primitive, indispensable to the formation of the first judgment, and which is the first condition and link of human knowledge. This primitive idea is the light and life of reason, and the form of forms; since it is universal, it is also the most elementary and simple and it is to be found, accordingly, in every judgment, in every operation of our mind as its most essential factor. It contains necessarily as in germ all human knowledge; it is the ruling thought, and successively becomes cause, substance, finality. According to Rosmini, such an idea can not but be the "idea of being" or the "ideal being." In fact, our internal analysis shows us that our cognitions have the idea of being as a common element. This idea is at the bottom of every thought.

"The idea of being," he says, "is the most universal of all ideas. It is what remains after the last abstraction possible; and its removal puts an end to all thought and makes every other idea impossible."<sup>17</sup>

"Man has by nature an intuition of that ideal and indeterminate being which contains all entity in an indistinct state, in a way analogous to that in which a large block of marble contains all the statues which the sculptor proposes to make out of it, or a given superficies all the figures that can be designed thereon."<sup>18</sup>

This "corner-stone" of the edifice of human knowledge, virtue, and happiness, which Rosmini sought from his early youth, this nucleus, source, and rule of every art and science, this very efficient means of philosophical and social restoration, is not a production of reason itself; it does not derive from the thinking self, like the Kantian forms; but it is communicated from without, and it is, therefore, not subjective, but objective.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "The Origin of Ideas," Vol. II., No. 411, page 17.

<sup>18</sup> "Theodicy," Vol. II., No. 668, page 159.

<sup>19</sup> See "Filosofia del Diritto," Introduzione. Pagani reports in his "Life of Rosmini" that the Italian philosopher proposed to himself the great problem of the origin of ideas when he was seventeen years old (1814), and that in the following year he discovered the fundamental principle of his philosophy.

## PART II

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### THE ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF ROSMINI'S ETHICAL THEORY

#### INTRODUCTORY

##### THE SCOPE AND METHOD OF ETHICS

THE science of ethics is, according to Rosmini, the director of human life, since its purpose is to direct man's rational activity. Man's goodness, however, depends upon the goodness of his will, for the will is the supreme and active rational power, which controls and synthesizes all his intellectual and moral actions. Nay, the will is precisely the same radical and immanent activity which constitutes human personality. Whence our philosopher concludes that man is moral, because his will is susceptible of good and bad activity, of moral or immoral acts and habits, or, in one word, of morality.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the crux of every theory is to discover the factors which make good man's will, or, in other words, what is "moral good" or "virtue." Man is endowed with the faculty of sensation as well as with that of intelligence. By the faculty of sensation, he perceives things as they are; by the faculty of intelligence, he perceives things as possible. This different mode of perceiving is, according to our philosopher, the cause of distinction between subjective and objective good.

The sense is the source of subjective good; the intellect is the source of objective good. Every sensible good stimulates and satisfies man; and he is naturally impelled to unite himself to such a good, and to enjoy it. Man, however, does not regard the objective or "intelligible" good as something which belongs to himself, as something which may be felt by him. He merely considers it as an object of his intelligence, of his intellectual intuition everywhere and in whatsoever mode it may be found. "The objective good is merely contemplated by the intelligence." Now, the burning question is whether the moral good is subjective or objective.

Rosmini believes this distinction to be of the highest importance,

<sup>1</sup> See "Antropologia," I., IV., Chs. VI., VIII.; "Prefazione alle opere di filosofia morale"; "Compendio di etica," Introduzione, §§I., II.; "Theodicy," Nos. 398, 410.

since the confusion of the two kinds of good has brought ruin to philosophy and morals.<sup>2</sup> He praises the German school because of its contribution to the important distinction, whereby ethics has been delivered from the motivation of happiness.<sup>3</sup>

To say that moral good is subjective, is, according to Rosmini, to base it upon the relativity of human ideas and purposes, and, consequently, upon individual opinions, preferences, and caprices; thus it can be found together with a bad will. This is the fatal consequence of the philosophy of sense. But our philosopher, impelled by the bias of his mind and character, is determined to oppose such philosophical premises and ethical consequences. He seems thoroughly convinced that the ethical conduct of life needs sure principles, that the norm and standard for the valuation of worth must be unique, fixed, and absolute, and, finally, that it may be found above and beyond individual experience, in a Platonic metaphysical atmosphere.

Rosmini, following the German philosophers, eliminates happiness, that is to say, just what the Greek thought to be its essential element, from the science of ethics. He holds that ethics is only concerned with moral good. Eudemonology is the science which deals with happiness.

Thus, the great problem the moral philosopher is called upon to solve is the problem of the nature of moral good. It is indeed a problem of the highest practical importance, since human happiness depends upon its right solution. The nature of moral good, however, may be traced only by the analysis of its fundamental factors. Now, from all Rosmini's ethical works it may be concluded that he thinks the moral good to be the outcome of two main factors, one of which we may call "metaphysical" and the other "psychological." According to him, all ethical judging, the will and its whole activity, must conform to a supreme and fundamental law of action, which is categorically imperative, universally true and valid as well as universally uniform. This is, for him as for Kant, the most significant feature of morality. Such a law, however, which he supposes to be prior to all particular laws, grounding their existence and obligatory force, is objective, absolute, and independent of all empirical motives.

This primal and fundamental law is the metaphysical and chief factor of morality; it constitutes its essence. But the law presupposes an agent, and an agent capable of adjusting himself; it presup-

<sup>2</sup> See "Prefazione alle opere di filosofia morale"; "Principii della scienza morale," Ch. III.; "Storia comparativa e critica intorno al principio della morale," etc.

<sup>3</sup> See "Principii della scienza morale," *op. cit.*, Ch. III., a. I.



poses a free will. Neither the law nor the will alone constitutes morality.

The moral situation, according to Rosmini, involves also the psychological factor, and both ethical factors, not asunder, but in reciprocal relation. The science of ethics is then confronted by another problem of no less importance: the problem of the nature of the agent and of the relation between law and the will in order to have human actions clothed with morality, and therefore good.

It is the business of ethics to answer these central problems, which form the core of every ethical theory. Let us notice here that Rosmini does not regard an ethical theory as a working hypothesis, since ethics is not for him hypothetical, conditional, and relative. He considers ethical theory as helpful to morals because of its formulation of fixed precepts for action, rather than for the scientific insight it affords into truth. He does not define ethical theory from the standpoint of principles which can provide a method of action, but from that of rules which are prescriptions for it. Ethics, however, is a science for him, not an art, as for John Stuart Mill.<sup>4</sup> It is, indeed, a science because it formulates laws, but it is a practical science, as its laws are formulated for the sake of action. It may, accordingly, be called "the theory of practise" or "the theory of action."<sup>5</sup>

Ethics, says Rosmini, is "the science which gives systematic order to the norms to which human actions must adjust themselves, and determines the relation between actions and norms."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Logic," Book 6, Ch. 12.

<sup>5</sup> See "Prefazione alle opere di filosofia morale."

<sup>6</sup> See "Sistema filosofico," No. 216.

## CHAPTER I

### THE METAPHYSICAL FACTOR OF MORALITY

ROSMINI, being determined to set up the ideal of reason against the relativism of sense, seems to regard as basic the conviction that the concept is the goal of science, since conception alone gives us the permanent essence of things, while the objective content of conceptual knowledge is the idea. According to him, the idea is merely the immediate and direct cognition of things in their proper essence, which is eternal.<sup>1</sup>

Since an idea is an essence, and since our judgment is always right when an idea is its rule, Rosmini thinks that an idea, a notion, is also the rule or standard according to which we must judge of the morality of our actions, and behave: that is to say that the moral law is nothing else than an idea.<sup>2</sup> The notion of "perniciousness," for instance, is the notion through which we know what actions are pernicious or not. We compare and conform our actions with such a notion, as if it were a type. The moral law is then a notion. Besides, Rosmini seems to accept the law exalted by Socrates to the principle of scientific method, namely, the law of logical dependence of the particulars upon the universal. He thinks, accordingly, that every notion supposes and depends upon another, anterior to itself, and that a series of notions supposes a primordial one that is the ground upon which all the others are based. Thus, since moral norms are nothing else but notions, according to our philosopher, they also suppose a notion which is the first of the whole possible series. And he finds that every moral law is indeed permeated with a common form or idea, as every one indicates and prescribes something common, or what is "moral good" in human action. From that he concludes that all laws are derived from a fundamental one, or, in other words, they are nothing else but applications and consequences of a primordial and basic one. That is the fundamental idea through which we form our moral judgments. Now, the question arises: What is this fundamental idea or notion? What is this primal and basal law? Rosmini thinks that such notion and law are the outcome neither of

<sup>1</sup> See "Psychology," No. 1339; "Principii della scienza morale," Ch. I., a. I., and Ch. II., a. II. "*L'essenza*," says Rosmini, "*non è se non ciò che si comprende nella idea della medesima*."

<sup>2</sup> "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. I., a. I.

experience, nor of reflection, as they have nothing to do with man's sensuous nature, nor with the whole world of phenomena. Man as sensuous being can afford no foundation for a law which is supposed to be supreme, and independent of all empirical motives. Its seat is indeed man as noumenon, to use Kant's language, or his reason, that is to say, his essential and characteristic part. The fundamental law, however, is not a product of reason, as Kant holds it to be. Rosmini thinks that the notion which is the root of all laws and moral norms, which is valid and uniform universally for rational beings, can not be created by reason. According to him, it is an original possession of the mind. Our mind is passive, as the law is given to it prior to all perception or individual cognition. Such a notion, moreover, according to Rosmini, is endowed with immutability, eternity, universality, and necessity.<sup>3</sup>

Now, the idea, endowed with such divine characteristics, can not fail to be the idea of being, not of this or that being, but of universal being. The idea of being is anterior to all sensations and association, and then to all ideas; it is found at the bottom of every thought; it is used by our mind as the rule of all our judgments.<sup>4</sup> Since the first Idea is the factor and source of all judgments, it follows that it is also the factor and source of all ethical judgments, and thus that it is the fundamental law, the generator and the *raison d'être* of all laws and moral standards. Besides, since it is the light of reason and since our mind, when it reasons and judges, does nothing but apply it, we ought to follow it when we perform our actions. By so doing, we follow a fixed and absolute rule and ideal of rightness, or truth itself.

But how may the ideal being, or the essence of being, be the supreme moral rule, or the rule of moral good? How may it be the means whereby we judge of the good and evil of our actions? How may it be the supreme criterion or standard of morality?

Rosmini thinks that the moral good of human conduct is a kind of good; accordingly, we can not judge of it, unless we have first the notion of good in general. By defining the moral good, we do nothing else than determine and limit the universal notion of good, and adapt it to moral science, which does not deal with the general good, but with a special good, namely, with the moral. What is then good in general?

Our philosopher makes an original analysis of the nature of good. Men, he says, usually claim as "good" the object which pleasantly stimulates and answers to our faculty of desiring, namely, the faculty which impels us to enjoy the good. Of course, an ob-

<sup>3</sup> See "*Principii*, *op. cit.*, Ch. I.

<sup>4</sup> See "*New Essay on the Origin of Ideas*," Nos. 558-574.



jeet which is provocative of abhorrence rather than of longing to possess and enjoy it, is never said to be "good." Thus the real and concrete good involves some interdependence, some connection, some relation between things and our appetitive power; it implies, from one side, the adaptability, the fitness of things to satisfy our needs, our craving, our personal convenience, and, from the other, the existence of our conative impulse towards them.

Such interrelation supposes, indeed, a being capable of feeling, of desiring, and of seeking the objects which are endowed with provocative characteristics. Now, may such a being fail to desire itself? No, indeed. Its tendencies fatally converge towards the preservation and development of its own nature. It would be an obvious inconsistency to say that a being might long for its own annihilation, as annihilation is nothing, and nothingness can not be the object of an appetite. Every existing being then has a tendency to unfold itself, to better itself, and to preserve itself. Development, perfection, and preservation are its good.

The same power of desiring is nothing else but the power of aiming at its own perfection, and at everything that has the possibility of helping to reach the natural goal of every being, that is to say, its expansion of life, its totality and completion, or, in a word, its good.

Good and Being, therefore, are identical terms, and the ancients were right to define good as the end of all things and the object of universal desire. The identity of Good and Being is also confirmed by the analysis of the satisfaction of our appetitive faculty. Rosmini finds in every satisfaction two elements, namely, a general condition of well-being or an enjoyment, and a perfection, a value, or some worth which is enjoyed. The question naturally arises whether these two elements of the subjective good are necessary to constitute the concept of good, or whether one alone is sufficient. When we indicate the perfections or values of a certain nature, do we not indicate so many goods? Do we not give an account of them before considering any appetitive power? Are we not wont to attribute degrees of perfection and good even to inanimate and insensible natures? Do we not usually say that every thing is good, when it is considered in its own nature? Do we not take as synonymous terms "perfection and good"? Do we not conceive the perfections of the various natures as so many beings independently of the subject which might be stimulated by them, and might long for them? Rosmini thinks that man's idea of perfection or value is the outcome of experience. For a sensible being can not perceive any perfection if it does not feel it; and our mind can not think of a certain good, unless it is presented to it by feeling.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. II., a. I.; his "Ideologia."

Accordingly, the former question may be expressed as follows: Since we can not perceive and hence can not know the worth of the various natures, unless we have some feeling and appetite, does it follow that the feeling and appetite are also necessary to their existence? In other words, may a perfection, a good, exist without being sensible?

Rosmini holds that it is of the highest importance to notice that a thing to be evaluated, to be a perfection, must afford some sensible satisfaction, that is to say, its qualities must be felt by some agent. It thus implies some relation to some sense, and then to some being, for whom alone it has value. A perfection which does not give any enjoyment, does not perfect, can not be conceived as such. A perfection, therefore, involves "sensibility," that is to say, adaptation, aptitude to be felt and desired; it involves some relation to a being endowed with the power of feeling. Even the perfections of inanimate things are said to be perfections because of their relation to some being furnished with senses.

Thus, we may conclude that neither enjoyment, nor perfection, alone, is the essential constituent of the idea of good. Both are required to constitute it, as both are so closely interdependent that they can not be conceived asunder. A desirable object always presupposes a feeling subject; and an object which is enjoyed always involves a relation to some agent; the goodness of both objects implies the existence of some being. The analysis of the subjective and empirical good proves, according to Rosmini, that Being and Good are identical terms. Our philosopher proves their identity by considering the good, not only in its relation to sense and appetites, and then to some being, but even by the analysis of the concept of good, namely, by investigating what our understanding recognizes and distinguishes within the concept of good. According to him, our understanding considering good as its own object, or as concept, sees it stripped of its relation to feeling. For it is its law to forget, or, at least, not to notice what is mingled at the very beginning of the process of formation of concepts. These being formed, are kept under a synthetic condition, under a formula of what our understanding saw in the first and immediate cognition, and to it we refer, without paying any more attention to what is present in sensation. In like manner, if we examine the origin of our idea of good and perfection, we find that at the very beginning we have associated an agreeable sensation with it, so that we did not recognize any good, unless it was followed by some pleasant impression. After having acquired the habit of attributing the concept of perfection to things we have known by experience to be pleasant, we think of them, without paying any more attention to



their power of modifying us pleasantly. Thus the term "perfection" is gradually freed in our mind from its relation to the senses; it acquires a general value; it becomes a universal concept, and thus independent of its connection with sensuous nature. Rosmini notices that our understanding goes further in this process of idealization, as it also observes the pleasant or painful condition of the human body to correspond to a certain disposition of its parts, to a certain order in the measure, in the form, in the number, in the reciprocal connection and action of its parts. Thus, such intrinsic order, to which a pleasant sensation corresponds, is considered as perfection of the human body. In that case, however, we still call perfection the condition of the body coexistent with the agreeable feeling. But we afterwards generalize our own experience, and, observing the other beings, animate and sensible like us, regard them as perfect, because we are aware that they realize their ideal type, they are what they ought to be, they "*are*," namely, they conform to their essence, and, accordingly, they seem to enjoy the most pleasant existence.

In the same manner, we see inanimate beings to be more or less fit to subserve our own needs, or those of other beings, because they have a certain condition, configuration, and composition, or, in other words, they are what they ought to be, namely, useful and agreeable. In all these cases the term "perfection" has the meaning of the intrinsic order, of the most complete condition of development and realization of every being.

Such essential order, however, such completeness or perfection exists only within our understanding, because of its own process, as concept or, what is just the same for Rosmini, as essence. Thus, the essence of a being is its ideal type, or the rule or criterion, according to which we judge of the degrees of its goodness. We think it good to be what is required by its essence, what unfolds and realizes it, or, in other words, what is appropriate to its nature, and harmonizes with its existence.

The energies of every being naturally seek that end, as its most perfect and typical condition. Thus the analysis of the idea of good shows that Being and Good are two terms involving each other; that they are two aspects of the same truth. The Scholastic saying "*ens et bonum convertuntur*" is justified. Now, it is important to notice that the value, perfection, or the good of beings is contemplated, indeed, by our intelligence, but it is contemplated, according to Rosmini, as something real, objective, and then independently of the pleasant sensuous effect, as it is seen under the light of the primordial object of our mind, or, of ideal being. Whence it follows that all essences are nothing else, for our philosopher, but de-



terminations and limitations of the universal and ideal Being itself. Besides, it follows that the idea of good, like the idea of being, is more general than sensation, it is prior to it.

Rosmini notices, moreover, that, since the value or good of a being is found in the realization of its essence, it follows that everything which opposes and thwarts the process of its development is evil. Thus evil is, not absolute negation of good, but lack of some perfection. Accordingly, a series of values, of good, may be found in every being, starting from its first and imperfect existence and ending with its last stage of development and realization. The more adequately, then, a being realizes its ideal, the more entity it has, the greater is its good. Now, since Being and Good are one and the same thing, it is obvious that we know the value or the degree of perfection of a being, when we possess its idea; when we know its essence, its degree of existence, as well as its intrinsic order and how far it is realized. Besides, from the identity of Being and Good it may be concluded that the notion whereby both are known by us is the same. Since, according to Rosmini, the idea of being is the origin of all beings, it follows that it is also the origin of all goods; and as it is the means whereby we know all beings, it is evident that it is also the means whereby we know and value every kind of good, namely, the good which satisfies some agent, or subjective good, as well as the good which is independent of all personal and empirical motives, and which is good in itself, or objective good.

From the fact that Being and Good are identical Rosmini finally infers the concept of Absolute Good. As Absolute Being is the being which has the whole of essence within itself, so also Absolute Good is the good which includes the whole of good. The Complete Being is the Complete Good, which lacks nothing, and for this reason it is absolute. The Complete Being, however, is the supreme good, not only in and for itself, but it is also the supreme good relatively to particular beings. Rosmini calls the complete and absolute Being, which is by the same fact the supreme and absolute Good, "God." God, therefore, is the end of human activity. To become one with Him is the high destiny of man as rational being.<sup>6</sup>

Now, to understand Rosmini's point of view, it is of the highest importance to notice what is fundamental in his ethical theory. He holds that every real individual, realizing his own essence, does nothing but realize the essence of being. Since this partakes of the universal, infinite, necessary, and divine essence, it partakes of the Absolute Being, of God Himself. By the same fact, every real individual by realizing good partakes of the Absolute Good. Thus

<sup>6</sup> See "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. III., a. VIII.

the Absolute Good is the goal of rational activity, and ought to be recognized and loved wherever found.

Every man, therefore, according to Rosmini, as rational being, and thus partaking of God Himself, makes a moral demand, that is to say, he demands to be recognized and loved, because of his participation in the Absolute Being and Good. The essence of morality, then, or, the ultimate ground of every moral law, of every moral obligation, lies in the respect due to Infinite Essence. Accordingly, the principle of morality may be formulated in the following law: "*Recognize the essence of being.*" But to recognize the essence of being is the same as to recognize its goodness; we can say then that the principle of morality consists in the practical recognition of every being, according to the good it is found to possess, that is to say, according to its value and worth.

Now, since the essence of morality is identical with the essence of being, it must be endowed with the same characteristics. Since the essence of being is objective (because it is independent of every subject), so also is moral good or the essence of morality. We do not create it; we only verify it. The essential law of pure reason, according to Rosmini, consists in grasping being in itself, so also the law of practical reason is the good appreciated in itself, or, in its intrinsic and objective value, not according to the merely personal and subjective profit which may derive to the agent from his faithfulness to duty. Besides, good partakes of the immutability of Being; its stability is then eternal. The good which is object of human actions is, finally, as the essence of being, divine and infinite. God, therefore, ought to be, according to our philosopher, the focus of thought and love, the satisfaction of man's intelligence and heart. Moreover, since the principle of morality and obligation consists in the practical recognition of every being, according to its essence and goodness, it follows that we must distribute our love among things in proportion to their respective grades of being, and prefer the greater to the lesser grade. "I must prefer my country," says Rosmini, "to my life." The moral law says absolutely: "Sacrifice thyself for thy country."<sup>7</sup>

But here it may be asked: How can man, a finite being, ascend to the knowledge and practical recognition of the essence of beings, which is infinite? How can he measure the degrees of entity? What is the first and supreme rule whereby we know when and how the principle of obligation must be applied? Rosmini answers that man is endowed by nature with the intuition of the essence of being. By means of this intuition, he is fitted to know and measure every essence and then every goodness. Since the idea of being is the

<sup>7</sup> "Theodicy," No. 725.

supreme rule whereby we conceive and measure the entity of beings, and consequently the objective good, or, moral good, end of human actions, the ethical formula "*Follow the light of reason*," may be translated into this other: "*Follow the idea of good, as it shows you the measure of the entity of every being*." To know its entity is to know its value, its worth, its dignity, and its right to be recognized for what it is and to be loved accordingly.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, according to Rosmini, the idea of being is the ground of ethical judgments; it is the source of morality and obligation; it is the metaphysical basis of the law of knowledge and action. Epistemology and ethics have the same foundation, independent of man's experience. This is the kernel of Rosmini's ethical theory!

<sup>8</sup> "Theodicy," No. 725.



## CHAPTER II

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR OF MORALITY

THE whole value, the whole good, of beings lies, according to Rosmini, in the fact that beings, realizing their own essence, partake of the infinite, immutable, and absolute essence of the Supreme Being. Their good, however, if it is known and enjoyed only by intelligence, is "objective good."

Intelligence considers them in themselves, independently of every personal interest, of every empirical motive, and, by so doing, it attributes to them that which really belongs to them, and thus it does them justice. The moral good, then, can not be anything else than the objective good. And the supreme moral law, the whole moral legislation is rooted and grounded in the objective good, or, in other words, in the Absolute and Eternal. But the possibility of man's subordination to a certain law depends upon its promulgation. Man must have knowledge of the law in question; it must be present in his mind as an idea; for when man obeys a normative rule, he adjusts his rational activity, his will, to it. The root of human activity lies in knowledge itself; action is always directed by idea; and will terminates through action in an object known and set before it by intelligence.<sup>1</sup>

The supreme moral law, therefore, or the objective good, must be, indeed, present to the intelligence, not as a mere object of contemplation. If the will does not intervene to will it, after having known it, objective good does not acquire the characteristic of moral good. A merely speculative, formal, sterile knowledge of the good can not constitute the notion of moral good. When the agent wills the good known already by his intelligence, the good is moral. Thus the moral good is, according to Rosmini, the objective good, known by the intelligence and willed by the will.<sup>2</sup>

The quality of morality is simply the relation of the objective good to the intelligent nature willing it. Now, Rosmini thinks that the supreme and fundamental law of morality has been promulgated to man from the early dawn of his life. Since the idea of being is the light of reason itself, or "a spark of the divine fire" which enables man to know the entity of beings, it performs the

<sup>1</sup> "Theodicy," Nos. 398, 631, 637, 644.

<sup>2</sup> "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. IV., a. VI.

function of the supreme moral law; since it is innate, it follows that we carry within ourselves the germ of morals, the source of the whole moral legislation; we bear within ourselves the reason or will of God Himself, unceasingly proclaiming what is right.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, for Rosmini, the fundamental law or notion of morality is not the outcome of the course of experience, but something imposed, originating from a transeendental, invisible authority. The mind is merely passive when it receives the principle of morality, as it can not be legislator to itself; it can impose no norms, no standards of action on itself. Accordingly, the basis and justifying principle of the ethical judgment lie outside of the mind itself in transeendental conceptions, or considerations that do not result from human experience. Our philosopher is thoroughly convinced that the principle of morality can not be empirically acquired, but that it must be implanted, because it is universal and categoric; it is truth itself, whereas experience, however repeated and multiplied, never gives anything more than particular facts.<sup>4</sup>

Reasons and laws can not be received by the senses; essentially unknown to sense, they are manifest only to rational natures.<sup>5</sup> The principle of morality is, therefore, infused into our reason. Thus, it is abstract and static!

But Being has, for Rosmini, always this essential characteristic, that it is good, and hence it can not be known except as good. Now, the knowledge of it as good implies an affection, an inclination toward it. Just as Being, in its character of "light," creates the intellect, a formal cause of the human soul, so the same being, in its essential character of "good," creates the "primitive will," as the final cause which actuates the first affection, the first volition, directed to universal being. And as the intellect is the receptive power, so the will is the active power which corresponds to it. Now, according to our philosopher, the intellect has, as its essential object, ideal being. Being is immutable, the intellect, then, has the nature of an "immanent" act rather than of a power. In the same way it may be said that the primitive and universal will has not the nature of a power, but of an immanent act, which is the principle and basis of power. Hence Rosmini prefers to call it "primitive volition," instead of primitive will.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Compendio di etica," Nos. 53, 54; "Theodicy," Nos. 5, 259, 262.

<sup>4</sup> "Theodicy," Nos. 138, 145, 151, 259.

<sup>5</sup> "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. I., a. III. Rosmini thinks that his conception conforms to Marcus Aurelius's conception of fundamental law. "*Hanc video sapientissimorum fuisse sententiam, legem neque hominum ingenii cogitatam, nec scitum aliquod esse populorum, sed aeternum quiddam, quod universum mundum regeret, imperandi, prohibendique sapientia.*" ("De Leg.," II.)

<sup>6</sup> "Psychology," Nos. 1008-1011. "The immanent act is that which en-

Man, accordingly, by the intuition of the essence of the universal being, is enabled to know the essence of real and individual beings, that is to say, their value, their worth, and their "claim" to be recognized and loved. For the same reason he has a natural and spontaneous predisposition toward the universal being or universal good. And since the moral principle imposes adhesion to the known entity of beings, man is by nature predisposed to act in accordance with the fundamental moral law. Such a force which tends to the whole of being, to universal good, may be called "moral," because it comes from being and goes to being.<sup>7</sup>

Thus the human will carries within itself a relation of conformity to the first and eternal law, or notion of being. Man, as a real being, is finite, but by the intuition of Being, he is also intellectual and moral, and partakes of the infinite. His tendency, however, to act morally, that which Rosmini calls "moral liberty," in so far as it is natural and spontaneous, is not meritorious. Man is necessitated to act with moral liberty, that is to say, he is determined to his action, not by external cause, but by his inner impelling bent to adhere to good in general. This natural inclination of the subject to universal good is what constitutes the will itself.<sup>8</sup>

The will, regarded as such, is not the source of merit; it deserves neither praise nor blame.<sup>9</sup> But if the will acts in accordance with this first activity, it preserves in its operation an order altogether analogous and corresponding to the order of being itself, and by this order it is determined to act with moral perfection. This point of view evidently involves a determinist and intellectualist conception of the will, and makes the decision of the will exclusively dependent on inner insight.

Does it mean that Rosmini does not believe in the freedom of the human will? Rosmini believes in it, and gives an original and interesting analysis of it. Liberty, according to him, springs up at a certain stage of the psychic process of action. Doubtless it does not intervene in the intuition of the essence of being, since this is absolute and necessary. This essential and divine power is given to man and he does not contribute anything to it. Nor does liberty intervene in the spontaneous and immanent tendency which the

dures with a being so long as no substantial change supervenes in it." *Ibid.*, 1205.

<sup>7</sup> See "Psychology," No. 896; "Etica," Nos. 514-525; "Teosofia," No. 1037. Such moral force is called by Rosmini "*Preponderanza morale*." It is nothing else but what is called by St. Thomas "*Bonum naturae, scilicet naturalis inclinatio ad virtutem*," 1a, 2ae, q. LXIII. and LXXXV., a. 1.

<sup>8</sup> See "Teosofia," No. 1037; "Etica," No. 29.

<sup>9</sup> Dante expresses the identical idea, when he says, "*Questa prima voglia Merto di lode o di biasimo non eape*." *Purg.* XXVIII., 59, 60.



idea of being or the light of reason produces in the will, impelling it to adhere to, and love, all entity and good. It may be said that the divine craves for the divine which is found in every intelligent being. Liberty, finally, does not intervene in the external action, as that depends on the will, subordinated, already, to a certain normative rule, and determined thereby. The rôle of free will, therefore, the merit or demerit of actions, and the responsibility of the agent, are to be sought elsewhere.

Rosmini thinks that man is endowed with a twofold activity; as an intelligent being he is endowed with rational activity; as a real being he is endowed with sensuous activity. Now, if he were merely intelligent, if he could shuffle off his mortal coil of animal qualities, he would be in a state of pure intelligence; he would communicate with beings by means of his reason; he would perceive their whole entity by the same means, and, by perceiving their entity, he would perceive also their value, their good. Such transcendental knowledge would, of course, induce a universal rational love for all beings; such universal love would afford intellectual delight to man, rid of his animality. This whole process would be spontaneous, necessary, voluntary, as the will of the rational nature would then follow its own natural inclination. Man, therefore, as an intelligent being, would always act morally, namely, according to his natural rational predisposition toward universal being and good, as well as in accordance with the moral demand of beings to be recognized and loved, in proportion to their entity. As a real being, however, man is endowed with feeling, with physical qualities and needs; in other words, he feels impelled by an inner physical force to act for his own satisfaction, pleasure, or happiness.

If this activity which aims, not at the good in itself, but at the good of the agent, could be naturally conformed with the rational and immanent activity, the freedom of the will would be useless. But it happens that both activities come into collision and seek to determine the will in opposite directions; either of which alone would suffice to make it act. At this crucial stage, the objects of opposite order, radically different, produce two kinds of volition. Both volitions are possible; as the one may determine the will towards the intellective and objective good, and the other towards the sensitive and subjective good. The choice between the two possible volitions is free. There is no coercion. Man has, according to Rosmini, the power of making one volition prevail over another, and thus of determining himself to action. This power which the will possesses, is called by Rosmini "liberty of indifference," "bilateral-liberty," or "meritorious liberty."

But how does the will display such a power? How does one volition prevail over another? How is the choice between two contrary volitions brought about? Rosmini holds that the will is a power which acts in accordance with the reasons that man has in his mind and proposes to himself. Whence we may conclude that the will can not operate unless man has reasons or knowledge, according to which he might deliberate, choose, and will. The reason or motive, however, does not determine the will.

The determining force, the power of free choice, or "liberty," lies within the agent himself. Liberty affords the agent, in the presence of several motives, the power of making one motive prevail over all others so that the predominating motive determines the will to act.<sup>10</sup>

Rosmini, however, does not mean that a motive might have the force of directing choice. According to him, there are two kinds of cognition. The first cognition of things is direct, immediate, instinctive, necessary, and so not voluntary. Through it we are furnished with ideas of things. The understanding forms perceptions, and such ideas as are consequent on these, in an instinctive and natural manner, and, for that reason it is not liable to error, for nature does not err. Through this first intellectual apprehension we perceive the thing in its entirety, by a simple act, as if it were a simple object. Thus, the direct cognition is purely synthetic; it is the primitive, spontaneous synthesis of being and sensation. Let us notice that in perceiving the things as a whole, we have no interest to perceive them in one manner rather than in another. We are then merely passive.<sup>11</sup>

Besides, we must notice that in perceiving the entity of beings, we have a conception of their value. Accordingly, direct cognition enables our theoretical reason to make speculative judgments and acquire speculative knowledge. The first ideas, however, by which we know things are for Rosmini equally indifferent; they have, in other words, not purposive, but representative character only. Thus Rosmini fails to notice that all our consciousness is dynamogenic, and that an idea is a nascent act. Our philosopher, however, thinks that the need of action impels the will to reflection, that is to say, to turn back upon what we before perceived directly and involuntarily; it urges the rational, active power to analyze, decompose, and consider previous and direct cognitions.

This process of reflection, of analysis, which is thoroughly voluntary and practical involves a "*practical evaluation*" or "*judgment*"

<sup>10</sup> "Antropologia," Ch. VII.

<sup>11</sup> See "New Essay on the Origin of Ideas," Vol. III., Nos. 1258, 1259, 1261; "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. V., a. III.



of the things, known already through previous, immediate cognition. At this stage the will displays its power of liberty. For it is free to appreciate and recognize things as they are in cognition and to adhere to their entity as known, as it is free to alter their value by arbitrarily increasing or diminishing for itself the degrees of being or entity, thus substituting another entity, feigned and created by the energy of its own caprice. The volitional activity then manifests itself by "recognition," either simple or fictitious. It implies, indeed, a previous cognition as well as no alteration of its object. This voluntary recognition is an assent to immediate cognition; it is true, just, moral, if the will, in recognizing the previously known entity, does not alter its value, but is content with that measure of value which direct cognition prescribes. On the contrary, it is unjust and immoral, if the will assumes that the entity of things is different from the one contained in the direct cognition, and thus estimates it at more or at less than its true worth, recognizing it as what it is not, not as what it is.

This practical force of arbitrary evaluation is simply the reason which prevails and determines the choice. Without the practical force there is no determination, but a mere inclination which does not end in choice. Thus, given the case in which each of two volitions has in its favor a reason of equal weight, the free will can, by increasing the force of the reason which is favorable to it, choose one rather than the other. Whence Rosmini concludes that the will may conform its activity to its moral liberty or to the moral claim of beings, and thus to the good, or to the opposite, and thus be unjust and evil.<sup>12</sup>

He notices, besides, that practical esteem produces a "practical love." We act because we are impelled by a practical love which prevails over other loves. We are free to will or not to will actions, because we are free to love or not to love them, to increase or diminish our love or our hatred of this or that action. This power of ours which is called liberty is practised first on the affections of our heart, and through it on the actions themselves.

But when we love a thing, we love it because we consider it good; we may, indeed, love something evil, but when we do so, we love it "*sub specie boni*." Thus, the intrinsic nature of love involves esteem of the object loved; our personal valuation is a factor in our own loving.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up; the process of the moral act, according to Rosmini,

<sup>12</sup> See "Psychology," No. 1103; "Antropologia," Nos. 636-643; "Theodicy," No. 621; "Etica," Ch. III., a. I., II., III.; "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. V.

<sup>13</sup> See "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. V., a. III.



is as follows: we first have ideas and memories of things; we have direct and necessary cognitions; we see things as they are. After the will provokes the reflection upon these things known, this voluntary reflection is just or unjust, according as it tends to recognize faithfully the direct cognition, or to alter it. The agent, during voluntary reflection, concentrates his attention, or meditates, upon the immediate cognition. Out of this voluntary meditation springs a keen and active apprehension, which is true or false, according as the act of the will, directing reflection, was right or perverse. The apprehension ends in a practical judgment or esteem. The practical valuation produces an intellectual delight or sorrow. Such a delight is the beginning of the love that immediately follows it as its completion and end, as such a sorrow is the beginning of the hatred that immediately follows it as its mark and fulfilment.

The external action is the last stage of the complex psychic process which the will instigates, under the pressure of action, carrying out its power of liberty. Liberty, then, according to Rosmini, consists in self-determination; the will uses its power of free choice between volitions, categorically different, only when there is conflict between subjective and objective good, that is to say, between duty, virtue, moral law, and pleasure, satisfaction, happiness, or, in other words, between the ideal and the real, the infinite and finite. Accordingly, it must be the law of the rational principle to consider the value of being in itself, independently of the accidental and real action which it exercises on the rational subject. That value must, therefore, be measured by ideal being, and not by considerations of subjective advantage and disadvantage, and must be estimated by comparison with ideal being. Our practical reason must not estimate its object at a different value from that which it has in itself considered with respect to ideal being. It must act in view of the true measure of that object discovered by comparison with the essence of being intuited by the mind in universal-ideal being. To act according to this measure is to act rationally and, hence, morally; to act from the mere impulse of the real action which an object exercises on us, is to abandon the law of reason, to follow that of blind, or merely sensible, real being. To act morally, in other words, we must direct our actions to being, as it is their natural end; thus we must forget ourselves and objectify ourselves in being, or in the object of our activity, as intelligent beings. And as the object of our rational and moral actions is the Infinite, we must merge ourselves in the Infinite, Supreme Being, the Absolute Good. When we love a thing, when we think of it, we do nothing but bring ourselves into the same thing as term of our love and thought, and forget

and, in a sense, annihilate ourselves. That is what Rosmini wants us to do before the objective, infinite, moral good, the goal of our rational activity.<sup>14</sup> By so doing, we perform a voluntary recognition of what we first necessarily know; we welcome the good of the things we have perceived; we recognize what is true, nay, truth itself; and thus we subordinate ourselves to the fundamental principle of morality; we are morally good and accomplish our supreme duty.

Now, since the principle of cognition which constitutes the supreme law, according to which the theoretic reason operates, supplies, likewise, the law, according to which the practical reason ought to operate, it follows that if the law of the theoretic reason says: "Being is the object of knowing," the law of the practical reason says: "Being ought to be object of practical knowing."<sup>15</sup>

Let us notice here that Rosmini's endeavors to distinguish reason into theoretical and practical have proved to be vain. He does not, indeed, regard, like Kant, the theoretical reason and the practical reason as two faculties radically different.<sup>16</sup> He thinks that there is but one rational principle, which in so far as it knows is called "theoretic," and in so far as it acts is called "practical." But he identifies them *de facto*. And, indeed, since speculative reason is constituted by the intuition of being in general, since the practical reason is the same recognition of the essence of beings, and since good, the term of the practical reason, and being, the term of pure reason, are one and the same thing, inasmuch as they are convertible terms, it follows that both pure and practical reason have the same object and term; there is no conflict between them; they are not distinct, but are one reason, one instrument of activity; and thus the rational principle which is found in man is for practise, action, life.

Moreover, let us notice that Rosmini, making morality dependent only upon knowledge, fails to consider man in his totality, as he neglects to pay attention to the life of feeling which, as well as the life of reason, claims to be a basis of ethical judging.

Finally, it is of the highest importance to notice that Rosmini derives the conception of human dignity from the fact that man is endowed with the intuition of Being, whereby he is enabled to perceive, recognize, and love the entity of beings, and, since their entity is nothing but participation in the Absolute, it follows that man is

<sup>14</sup> "Psychology," No. 1429; "Theodicy," Nos. 384-415; "Teosofia," II.; "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. V.

<sup>15</sup> "Psychology," No. 1399.

<sup>16</sup> See "Theodicy," No. 161.

enabled to know, recognize, and love the Infinite, the Absolute, or God Himself.

Besides, the light of reason, with which man is by nature endowed, is participation in God's light. It is, for Rosmini as for Flavius Justin, the natural revelation of the divine and "germinant Logos." Thus, man partakes of God's dignity. Accordingly, he can not be regarded as a means, but only as an end.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> See "Principii," *op. cit.*, Ch. III., a. IX.; Ch. IV., a. VIII. and IX.; "Storia comparativa," Ch. I., a. III.; "Teosofia," No. 831; "Etica," Nos. 98, 99, 102-104.



## CONCLUSION

THE theory of ideal being is the basis of Rosmini's vast philosophical edifice; it is the unifying factor in his whole system of thought; it is the starting point of every philosophical problem he confronts and discusses, as well as of his theory of ethics. His entire philosophy, then, stands and falls with the doctrine of being.

The fundamental error in Rosmini's system of philosophy and of ethics lies in his method. He begins with the universal or idea, and attempts to descend to the particular or the phenomenal. Thus he begins with an *a priori* element, with a theory of what is prior to every experience, with the highest abstraction, since the idea of being is one of the last terms of our intellectual elaboration that supposes, indeed, a series of previous operations. Now, to assume an abstraction, as the starting point of knowledge, is to assume a psychological and epistemological impossibility. Positive facts constitute the beginning of human knowledge. Something abstract, extra-empirical, can not be the object of experience, of idealization, of desire, of interest, as it has no value, no meaning for life, and consequently it can be neither stimulus nor response to any need or demand. The function of thinking is aroused by the presence of some object, which involves reaction or adjustment.

It can not be denied, indeed, that every judgment implies the notion of being, but we can not from this fact conclude that the idea of being exists within our mind, prior to all experience, and that it may be the main factor of all our intellectual development. The substitution of idea for fact, of intuition for perception, is an arbitrary and unscientific substitution. In fact, how can we pass from the mere notion of being to real being, from a mere abstract form of our mind to life? What bridges the gulf between the ideal and the real? According to Hegel it is "becoming"; according to Gioberti it is "creation"; according to Rosmini it is an uncontrolled synthesis between perception and ideal being.

Rosmini endeavors, indeed, to solve the difficulty by holding that the idea of possible being, indeterminate in itself, is determined by the act of perception, and thus it becomes the idea of a real being.

But such a postulate is not at all justified, and contains contradictory affirmations. The idea of a possible being, as it is simple and indeterminate, can not undergo the slightest change or modification, without being no longer what it was, without annihilating

itself, for the sake of being replaced by a new idea. Thus the latter would not be a transformation, but a suppression of the first.

The phenomenon of perception proves to be impossible in Rosmini's psychological theory. Perception is an act of adjustment of the organism to the environment, and we do not need any abstraction as means of performing such a biological function.

Besides, let us remark against Rosmini's theory of knowledge what Aristotle noticed against that of Plato, that is to say that our knowledge does not begin with universal, since our knowledge of the individual precedes our knowledge of the universal.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, Rosmini, following Plato, hypostatizes the universal, attributing to it a separate existence, characterized by immutability and eternity. But we may object to Plato as well as to Rosmini that the universal can not exist apart from the individual, since, if it did so, the transition from a knowledge of the one to a knowledge of the other would be impossible. Finally, Rosmini holds the universal to be ready-made, apart from phenomena, while we may say that the formal aspect of universality is a production of the mind, and, therefore, the universal, as such, does not exist in individual things, but in the mind alone. It seems to be arbitrary to derive the universal from a transcendental entity as Rosmini does. I can not help regarding as a mere chimera the belief in any abstract idea, containing intelligible essence, and conditioning and determining, as an eternal archetype, reality, the data of experience which is concrete, particular, and determined in space and time.

To believe in such a thing is to believe that human science may be severed into two orders of objects, absolutely distinct, and having no other relation than a kind of parallelism in their development. The abstract and the concrete are characterized by profound differences, but, in spite of those differences, both are products of experience.

But Rosmini's final motive was that of Plato, and he felt it necessary to assume the same rationalistic attitude, and to base his ethics upon metaphysical, or rather mythical epistemology. He, as well as Plato, thought that the knowledge in which virtue is to consist must be the cognition of what is truly real, as opposed to opinions which may be only relative, and dependent on phenomena, on empirical and subjective motives, thus compromising true knowledge and morals. The leading motive of both philosophers proved to be ethico-social, since both wanted to check the moral disintegration of their countries and to lift up the moral standard of national life by indicating moral conduct as factor of true happiness, individual as well as social. Thus the common ideal of their philosophical en-

<sup>1</sup> "Eth. Nic.," VI., II., 1143, b5.



deavors was to win true virtue by true knowledge. So I think that Rosmini assumed as thesis of his epistemological and metaphysical doctrine of ethics, the thesis discussed, in a special way, in Plato's *Meno*.<sup>2</sup>

Plato was convinced that the fundamental principle of morals was exposed to the danger of continuous change by the Protagorean doctrine of relativity. He thought, accordingly, that as Socrates had first taught, virtue is knowledge, and knowledge of the good. But he thought, moreover, that the absolute truth of conceptual knowledge consists in the fact that it conceives in the idea the true being, independent of every change.

Rosmini, like Parmenides, Socrates, and Plato, wanted to place reason in opposition to opinion; he thought that sensationalism and empiricism, which were the prevalent currents of philosophical thought in Italy at that time of national becoming, compromised or nullified the fundamental principles of epistemology and ethics. Accordingly, identifying being with good, in a Euclidean manner, presupposed a changeless supreme idea in man, as the rational measure, rule, and end of human actions, as it is also the fundamental source of epistemological and ethical law. He intended thereby to furnish the new national life with a basis eternally immune to change; he intended to respond to the need of new ideals, of new intellectual beauty, which the revival of Christian ideals and the influence of romanticism brought into every province of life.

Rosmini, as well as Scotus Erigena, making the individual dependent upon the universal, meant to subordinate all the particular forces to the almighty authority of the Supreme Being, and of the Church. He intended, indeed, to focus the minds of the oppressed Italians as well of the oppressors of that time and of all time, upon an inexhaustible source of truth and justice, quite independent of all circumstances and motives. That is the reason why he does not account for the dynamic, progressive character of morality, and thinks the moral life to be a changeless structure. He, moreover, intended to say that duties and rights undergo no change, as the moral order does not depend upon the will and the caprices of men, but upon the Absolute, Eternal, Supreme Being.

The unchangeable moral principle consists in the practical recognition of the entity or the good, partaken of by men, or, in other words, in the love for all who enjoy the divine within themselves. Such an idea, while it suggested reciprocal love and union to the groaning hearts of the Italians, kindled also their ardent desire for political emancipation. The fundamental moral law, divine in its

<sup>2</sup> See "*Phaedo*," and "*Republic*," especially Books IV. and V.



origin and nature, imposed on the oppressor's recognition of, and veneration for, human dignity.

Human rights are sacred as duty is sacred. Since justice is grounded in God's will, Rosmini meant that Italy's political deliverance and unity were God's will as well. Thus the Italian philosopher indirectly intended to foster the national aspirations of his compatriots and to help modify their political and social situation.

But the principle upon which Rosmini endeavored to build his system of ethics, although clothed with rational form, is religious and theological, and, therefore, more adapted to moral theology than to scientific ethics. A scientific theory of ethics can not be grounded upon an abstract and mystical presupposition, since what is outside phenomena is, by the same fact, outside the control of reason and experience, and can not be verified. The belief in an *a priori*, transcendental principle of morality involves denial of continuity in moral experience, not rational subordination, and hence the impossibility of scientific inquiry. For ethics, then, would only explain how to execute, how to carry out absolute and fixed ideals of conduct, while its function, as science, is to organize experimental results, and to show how man, free from every preoccupation, contributes in the creation of moral ideals. And man is enabled to say what is really good, or worth while in conduct, only by means of personal or racial experience. An ethics, truly human and scientific, since it exists precisely for the sake of man who lives and works in the world of phenomena and experience, can not have a basis lying outside all experience, unless it renounces a scientific standpoint, and is satisfied to be mere casuistry or dialectics. Moreover, Rosmini holds as supreme ethical formula the practical recognition of being in its order. If such practical recognition were the outcome of man, regarded in his totality, that is to say in his heart and intelligence, we could use it as a leading measure of the worth and good of beings, as well as for a rule of actions.

But Rosmini, following Kant, thought that there is an antithesis between the intelligible and the phenomenal world. He, as well as Kant, attempted to discover for ethics a rational foundation, independent of the world of phenomena. Both thought that experience is conditioned, while the moral law must be unconditioned, and its origin then must be independent of all experience. Both thought that all feeling is empirical, sensuous, egoistic, and can afford no foundation for the moral law.

Thus, both disregarded the life of feeling and emotion, which claims to build moral ideals in the process of human experience. Both have the same conception of the fundamental problem of ethics,

and begin, not with an original unity, but with a duality. Kant begins with the spontaneity and receptivity of the mind, while Rosmini begins with the idea of being and sensation. Such being, of which man has an immediate and intuitive vision, has, according to Rosmini, an objective value. But Rosmini does not prove the objective validity of the internal intuitive knowledge.

We may, accordingly, say that his "being" is nothing else than the subjective thought itself in its extreme abstraction. Thus, he does not begin with God, but, as Kant, with the human mind itself.<sup>3</sup>

Besides, since Rosmini denies to human mind the complete comprehension of the pure Being, and since he thus implicitly denies the possibility of deducing from it all the determinations of being, it follows that the pure being intuited by the mind is not the true, pure being, namely, God, but merely the being abstracted from reflection.<sup>4</sup>

Rosmini, however, does not agree with Kant in some other points. According to Kant, for instance, man is at once law-giver and subject. According to Rosmini, man can not impose laws on himself, as such an action presupposes authority, and hence he can not be legislator to himself. Moral conceptions, according to Kant, are gained from pure reason itself. Rosmini thinks that the fundamental law can not be derived from our own reason, but that it is given, and man is passive. Kant holds that duty springs neither from authority, nor from experience. Rosmini is thoroughly convinced that the source of duty is transcendental, that is to say, it is God. For Kant the characteristic feature of the ethical is autonomy: for Rosmini heteronomy. The dignity of human personality, according to Kant, depends on man's capacity for autonomy, or on his capacity for following the universal law, derived from his own reason; according to Rosmini, the dignity of human personality lies in the immediate intuition of being, in the participation of divine essence by means of the light of reason, and, finally, in man's natural capacity to incline to, and to merge himself in, God, source of moral good and happiness.

If we examine more particularly the moral edifice which Rosmini intended to build in those moments of intense national movement, we find that liberty, according to him, is an act merely intellectual; that is, not an act of mere contemplation, but an act of assenting contemplation. But is not this a metaphysical hypothesis

<sup>3</sup> See Spaventa, "La filosofia di Kant e Rosmini," pages 47-48; Fiorentino, "La filosofia contemporanea in Italia," page 23.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Franchi, "Ultima Critica," page 116; R. Benzoni, "Dottrina dell'Essere nel sistema rosminiano."



without any true ground? If the assent to contemplated being is a mere business of the intelligence, under the pressure of the idea of being (which is, according to Rosmini, leading, ruling, informing our rational life), does it not follow that the will is thoroughly determined *a priori*? Rosmini is mistaken in considering exclusively in man the intellective factor, making it the unique factor of all our inner events, and subordinating all our psychic activity to it. Conscious, however, of the necessity of accounting in the process of moral action for the active power of feeling, and anxious to explain the passage from idea to act, he discovered the practical love which he supposes to precede the realization of the will. It is an impelling force, but the intellect is, according to our philosopher, the acting force. But is there any volitional act which is not accompanied by feeling? Is there any act of the human will which is not at the same time conscious, and that, as object of consciousness, does not involve a condition, either agreeable or disagreeable? Consciousness of an object implies not only some mental presentation of the object, but also some subject to whom it is presented. The object may or may not appeal to the "whole" subject, not only to his intelligence, but to his impulsive and emotive life as well. If it appeals, it can not fail to arouse interest and desire and agreeable emotion. If it does not appeal, it stimulates aversion, and its consequent emotions. Rosmini fails to recognize that our psychic life is unique, coexistent with its factors, intimately inter-connected.

The life of intelligence and the life of feeling can not be viewed apart without renouncing the great discoveries of modern psychology. We can not, accordingly, conceive, as Rosmini does, the practical judgment as determined by mere ideas and abstract relations; for it is the anticipated representation of an act and hence has relation alike to sensibility, intelligence, and impulse. Such a representation can not fail to be accompanied by some emotion, with some active and motor reaction. Has not even the most ideal speculation an active side? Have not material representations as well as the most lofty speculations some relation to our emotive life? Have they not all some value for our personality? And since they have some value, some relation to our entire life why must moral judgments, which are quite practical, and in which mind and heart are interested, be regarded as isolated from our daily life?

Finally, moral good, according to Rosmini, corresponds to Being, made possible, indeed, by its relation to feeling, but subsistent in itself, independent of the feeling subject which apprehends it. If good, for man, is possible only in relation to feeling, how can Rosmini hold such good to be objective and subsistent in itself,



taking away every relation? That would be a catharsis, psychologically impossible, since a thing has no value and is no longer a good as soon as it has no relation to anything else. Since, according to Rosmini, an idea is constituted by matter and form, how does he imagine idea to be mere form, without any relation to matter? If subject and object, matter and form, ideal possibility and reality, are correlative terms, it is impossible to conceive one without the other. The belief in an ideal order apart from the real, and existing in itself, stripped from every previous relation to the real, is the belief in metaphysical dreams.

An ethics which claims to be scientific must present a conception or moral good that may be human, immanent, dynamic, developing through, and simultaneously with, psychological factors of individual and social order as well.—To sum up what has been said, the chief error in Rosmini's ethical theory is that it has for basis ideology, and not a psychology of human nature. His native qualities, however, his bias, his environment, the prevalence of romanticism over classicism, the great spiritual influence of Christian ideas, could not fail to determine Rosmini's mind to seek a system of morals in the region of metaphysics and of a rationalism which he thought immune to change, while everything was changing. Such a system of ethics as he considered to be the most urgently needed, the great Italian philosopher offered to his country, which he hoped to see morally renewed and become politically united and independent.

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